



The
Marshlands

John Frederic Herbin

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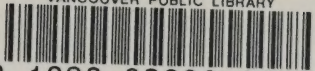
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The Marshlands

(Third Edition)

AND

THE TRAIL OF THE TIDE

By

JOHN FREDERIC HERBIN

Author of "History of Grand-Pré,"

"The Heir to Grand-Pré."



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS

1909

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These are but sketches of the common way,
Caught from the pictures I have loved so long:
Green marshlands where the swift red rivers throng,
The round of tide and season gold and gray;
Or strains dropt from a music-laden day;
Chords often minor, or a note made wrong,
Whether a sonnet or a simple song,—
The hand may fail when heart alone should play.

I pray my pictures and my songs may show
That earth has more than pleasure for the eye,
And deeper than the heart-hope ne'er to cease,
Beyond all faith of life, a word shall go
To shape the way unto the rhapsody
Of light and life and love, and toil's own peace.

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THE MARSHLANDS

The Marshlands

O DYKES that are mourning a nation
That laid you and lifted you high;
O shores with your old lamentation,
And sorrow that never shall die,—

I had found me adrift on your meadows,
And hailed by the voice of the deep,
As if called from the region of shadows,
Or waked out of visions of sleep.

I lifted my face as from slumber,
Leaped up to the touch of the sun;
And the days just beginning to number
Show the nonage of life all undone.

As a child that must learn to unravel
The things that shall trouble his sight,
And with feet that are fated to travel
Through seasons' new daytime and night;

As I grow in the love of my loving,
And learn to forget all the dream,
And the joy adolescent, outmoving,
Matures like your deep-flooding stream;

THE MARSHLANDS

As I hurry along with the hours,
With the purpose that perils and saves,
And dare all my efforts and powers,
As a swimmer leaps into the waves;

So I gladden with joy you imparted,
So I weep with the grief of your tears—
One shall succor me oft heavy-hearted,
The other shall strengthen my years.

For the word that you spoke to my hearing,
And the life that you served to my blood,
Shall be kept as a tender endearing
Love-word of my soul's maidenhood.

For your life has become of my living,
Through and through all the woof and the warp
Of my being—incoming, outgoing—
As the wind in the strings of a harp.

I have left all my earlier being,
Like a soul that is rid of its frame,
And with eyes of another am seeing
To recall the dead past without shame.

How the way of this life shall be bolder,
And be given to every desire,
From the calm that shall come to the older,
To the madness of the youth-heart on fire.

With these tides I am called to be stronger,
With these marshes my life shall unroll;
For I know not myself any longer,
In the light that has flooded my soul.

THE MARSHLANDS

As you learned of the sea in your tide-ways,
The heavens outstretching profound,
So you led me to open and broad ways,
New regions of vision and sound.

And you taught me the reason of sorrow,
And of joy that when deepest may fail;
Of the burdens laid up for the morrow,
Till the sun-glow seems deadened and pale;

And the death of the love that is single;
Of the life without profit and dole;
And the grief that with loving shall mingle,
Till anew shall come soul from a soul.

So I have now the burden of telling,
Your centuries' gift to my years.
Whatever the passion compelling,
I must live both your joy and your tears.

Across the Dykes

THE dykes half bare are lying in the bath
Of quivering sunlight on this Sunday morn;
And bobolinks aflock make sweet the worn
Old places, where two centuries of swath
Have fallen to earth before the mowers' path.
Across the dykes the bell's low sound is borne,
From green Grand-Pré, abundant with the corn,
With milk and honey which it always hath.
And now I hear the Matins o'er the plains,
See faith bow many a head that suffered wrong,
Near all these marshes taken from the tide.
The vision of their last great sorrow stains
The greenness of these meadows. In the song
Of birds I feel a tear that has not dried.

The Returned Acadian

ALONG my fathers' dykes I roam again,
Among the willows by the river-side.
These miles of green I know from hill to tide,
And every creek and river's ruddy stain.
Neglected long and shunned our dead have lain
Here, where a people's dearest hope has died.
Alone of all their children scattered wide,
I scan the sad memorials that remain.
The dykes wave with the grass, but not for me.
The oxen stir not while this stranger calls.
From these new homes upon the green hill-side,
Where speech is strange and this new people free,
No voice cries out in welcome; for these halls
Give food and shelter where I may not bide.

An Acadian, at Grand-Pré, to Longfellow

DEAR Master, while these fields rejoice,
And singing tides, regretting not the years,
Seem yet to hear thy tender voice,
I feel to-day the heart-throb and the tears.
Warm is thy look across the land,
Where never came thy living feet to stand.

A nation sorrows in thy song,
My people outcast, given unto woe.
Thy voice called heaven to the wrong,
Immortal word of pity to bestow.
How far thy sweet, strong voice shall fare,
Till earth shall know the story everywhere.

Away with tears! Let grief be gone!
Our living willows everywhere now wave
The hope that smiles; and earth alone
Knows where they nameless slumber in the grave.
The past is dead with all its shame,
Their scions cherish dear thy lasting fame.

They weep not now, nor ever pray,
No longer plead of strangers to befriend;
So hills are joyful, and the day
Shall never sadden, seasons without end.
Their dykelands know them ever gone,
Burnt roof and hearth long open to the sun.

AN ACADIAN, AT GRAND-PRÉ, TO LONGFELLOW

O Poet, thy soul's song I bring
To offer to these fields for all my race,
Not alien, though alone I sing,
And lift to earth and heaven a joyous face.
Thy tenderness was sweet with balm;
Despite the agony these fields are calm.

Thou camest not in life to see
The hallowed places of Acadian days,
Thine own Grand-Pré now glad for thee,
And for the memory of her face always;
Evangeline, who even now
Entwines the garland on thy tender brow.

Faed's Evangeline

"Sat by some nameless grave, and thought that perhaps in its bosom
He was already at rest, and she longed to slumber beside him."

—*Longfellow.*

EVANGELINE, sad-eyed with longing pain,
Lips mute of sorrow, though the soul must grieve,
Tender and firm and patient to achieve,—
Thy love is true whether his corse has lain
Where never thy fond eyes shall see again;
Or feels thy faith imbue him to believe
The close is near to which thy longings cleave;
The end to which thy life shall ne'er attain.
Sweet, sorrowing, mute, unplaining maidenhood,
Thou art the poem of that deathless fate
Still told in every year of rustling hay
That greens the meadows, where thy feet have stood.
When tides come early or are lingering late,
Forever will thy grief be o'er Grand-Pré.

The Gaspereau

BELOW me winds the river to the sea,
On whose brown slope stood wailing, homeless maids;
Stood exiled sons; unsheltered hoary heads;
And sires and mothers dumb in agony.
The awful glare of burning homes, where free
And happy late they dwelt, breaks on the shades
Encompassing the sailing fleet; then fades
With tumbling roof upon the night-bound sea.
How deep is hope in sorrow sunk! How harsh
The stranger voice; and loud the hopeless wail!
Then silence came to dwell; the tide fell low;
The embers died. On the deserted marsh,
Where grain and grass stirred only to the gale,
The moose unchased dare cross the Gaspereau.

The Dyke

FROM dyke to hill-side sways the level sweep
Of all the ripened hay in mid-July;
- A tideless sea of rustling melody,
By ancient river-channels of the deep.
Astray and straggling, or in broken heap,
Where birdlings flutter, dark the fences lie.
Far off, the tortuous rush-grown creek is dry,
Where looms the leaning barn like ancient keep.
Showing to heaven where his way has been,
The sounding wheel now bares what nature hides.
The breeze from the new hay its sweet distils;
The rustic Neptune steering o'er the green,
Before whose horses' tread the grass divides,
With chariot music trembling to the hills.

An Opened Grave

SPOILER of the grave, give back to earth
The bones, the dust of once a living breast.
Bare not to eyes of scorn or idle mirth
Whom death has given to everlasting rest.

Yield not to touch of desecrating hand
The sacred fragment of the earthly house,
Laid deep within the kindly, changeless sand,
Where centuries of toil shall not arouse.

Beneath the countless furrows from the plow
The memories of the earth have secret kept
The picture of dumb lips, and restful brow,
Of eyes that have not smiled nor wept.

It yet endures where you have rent the shell,
And broke the rest and calmness of the dark,
Disturbed the slumber long, that seemed so well,
Where life burned out, and left no final spark.

What is your mission, spoiler of the dead?
There is no jewel to bribe your lustful eye:
Rough hands of toil and brows sweat-garlanded
Were simply clad as toilers who must die.

They went to sleep and tender hands did lay
The sod, never in life to be upturned,
The years to pass unthinking of decay,
Only the rest that came at last, well earned.

AN OPENED GRAVE

Why have you, then, with careless, eager clutch,
Let in the sun upon this sad decay,
To whose fond living eyes it meant so much,
Glad to depart at last from life's bright day?

Whoe'er it was that once went for relief,
From pain or toil, a humble servitor,
Unto the grave, you play the part of thief
And rend the earthly mantle, once laid o'er.

The bones you clutch cry shame, unto your face,
Unheard, unheeded as you search the earth
For fragment of the frame whose life did pace
The measured paths of toil from humble birth.

Return to earth the remnants of the mold!
What long repentance e'er shall make you clean!
May your faint heart not shrink when cruel and cold
Death grips your hands and asks where they have been.

The Night-Mower

IN the soft dew-fall of an autumn night
A solitary mower marks his way
With hissing scythe in the brine-savored hay
Long hours before the dawn floods into light.
From faithless doubting now unveils my sight.
I shame to hear the certain swing and play
Of the strong toiler's arm whose night is day,
Treading the hours through in faithful might.
Ever he strikes with form invisible;
His whetting scythe oft ringing o'er the plain.
The moving murmur of the coming tide
Stirs the broad night, now full and palpable;
For wholesome pride and faith are mine again
Near the night-mower by the river-side.

The Sea-Harvest

ON the great sea-marsh where the eddies stray,
The mowers strike ere yet the dew is fled.
The sea-grass falls before their heavy tread,
Filling with odorous breath the whole green way.
On the tide's back, now with the broadened day,
Like a mild beast of burden slowly led,
The floating grass is meshed and gathered;
A great tide-harvest of salt-smelling hay.
Where herons stalk, and the shy blue-wing glides
In stillest haunts, is the man-worker seen;
Even the sea must garner for his good,
Till high and dark above the marsh and tides
Stand the great hay-towers, as they loom and lean,
Like turrets grim, to mark the solitude.

An Acadian at Grand-Pré

TO-DAY, alone of all my scattered race,
I see again the beauty of our land,
Made fair and fruitful by a banished hand;
Endeared of tongue never to know this place.
Meadows and dykes, and hearths long cold I trace;
And tyrant tides never to brook command,
Where undisturbed the rustling willows stand,
And the curved grass, telling the breeze's pace.
Before the march of power the weak must bend,
And yet forgive. The savage strong will smite.
The glossing words of reason and of song,
To tell of hate and virtue to defend,
Shall never set the bitter deed aright,
Nor satisfy the ages with the wrong.

The Dykes of Acadie

O MARSHES green, the dykes of Acadie,
I have been nursed upon your ancient breast,
And taught your patience and your heart's calm rest,
Your large content and fine serenity!
How many lessons have you given me;
Until reborn to deeper life, and blest,
You made me strong for every season's test;
And all I am, O dykes of Acadie!
So would I live your life of growing days,
Absorbing all, and giving all the gains;
Accepting skies that shine, or snow, or shower;
To lift like any blade of grass that plays
In sun and breeze; to age like you, dear plains,
The better to be young with fruit and flower.

The Diver

LIKE marble, nude, against the purple sky,
In ready poise, the diver scans the sea,
Gemming the marsh's green placidity
And mirroring the fearless form on high.
Behold the outward leap—he seems to fly!
His arms like arrow-blade just speeded free;
His body like the curving bolt, to be
Deep driven till the piercing flight shall die.
Sharply the human arrow cleaves the tide,
Only a foaming swell to mark his flight;
While shoreward moves the silent ring on ring.
And now the sea is stirred and broken wide
Before the swimmer's passage free and light,
And bears him as a courser bears a king.

Aftermath

AUGUST is hot in the flood of the summer sun,
Lolling and still in fields and windless places;
Idle all day like a woman with hair undone,
Her feet unshod, her bosom bare of laces.

All her passion and pride, her beauty and strength are born
Mature, and grown to power beyond disguising.
Her nights stay longer, and each later morn
Her ardor yields not to the Autumn rising.

Hotter comes her breath, her touch is harsh
Where the scythe has bared the grassy slopes and
meadows;
On the breathless sea, and the stifled miles of marsh,
Where spruce and willow lose the cool of shadows.

AFTERMATH

Yet the dewy nights are sweet; and the lagging dawn
Awakes to the ringing scythe, like a heavy sleeper;
And the dyke-ward drift of the tide with the marsh-hay
 mown,
Drives off the cranes from the hidden creeks grown
 deeper.

Sometimes as horse and troopers march asleep,
Unheard the iron shoes and clanking sabres;
The tide floods still in the van of the rapid deep,
Through creek-cut marshes and up winding rivers.

Now a ship like a gull swings off the anchoring clay,
And drifts with the fisher-craft from the nearer offing;
While the inshore flight of the gulls on the edge of day
Startles the silent flats with joyless laughing.

As the sea drifts in the toilers deep in the tide
Gather the grass, as fishermen drag the meshes—
Hunters surrounding the game on every side,
Till the spoil is captive in the binding leashes.

Trumpet-like the call of the herds long-blown
Wafts mellow and far to the drowse of the sense's hearing;
The perfumes fresh from the marshy levels mown
Bring taste of the tide whose overflow is nearing.

Still the meadows are the mower has shorn,
Where the clover stood, and perfumes rose from the
 flowers;
And the stubble stark where the summer's yield was borne
Now seemeth dead to the sun and the touch of showers.

AFTERMATH

From the empty barns have the hollow echoes fled;
The lofts are loaded high with the grassy sweetness.
The grain ungarnered and ripe swings lazy head,
And all the corn is bursting with its greatness.

Leaning hay-ricks dark rise everywhere
Across the meadows and the waters looming.
The higher tides flood the marshes unaware,
Among strange ways and newer channels roaming.

September comes to the bare burnt places, and cools
With gentle touch and breath, a glad new-comer;
Refreshing the languorous lakes and the dying pools,
The wide-eyed mistress of the after-summer.

Fragrant are the orchards ripe of fruit,
And fairest the flowers of the autumn bringing.
Songsters seem to be wording a second suit,
So eager and so joyful in their singing.

Primroses yet are blown, and the thistle abloom,
The August-flower bright from the bud its month gone
over.

Asters smile near the rushes' damp and gloom.
A sweetness lingers near the thrifty clover.

The whirl of the marsh-peep, cloud of grey and sheen,
At noon at the edge of the spent and silvery tide;
The clear, far cry of the curlew yet unseen,
Give life to the empty reaches red and wide.

The season will not die though all the dykes
Seemed to the roots destroyed by the ruthless mower.
Where now the cattle graze, and the marsh-hawk strikes,
Are the fields of aftermath of the secret sower.

Haying

FROM the soft dyke-road, crooked and waggon-worn,
Comes the great load of rustling, scented hay,
Slow-drawn with heavy swing and creaky sway
Through the cool freshness of the windless morn.
The oxen, yoked and sturdy, horn to horn,
Sharing the rest and toil of night and day,
Bend head and neck to the long hilly way
By many a season's labor marked and torn.
On the broad sea of dyke the gathering heat
Waves upward from the grass, where road on road
Is swept before the tramping of the teams.
And while the oxen rest beside the sweet
New hay, the loft receives the early load,
With hissing stir, among the dusty beams.

Morn

LATE Morn, with drowsy eyelids drunk with night,
Still-breathed in slumber, slipped a glance
And slept again, veiling her eyes' delight.
Too deep the ecstasy of nightly trance
To break the power of a tender dream.
Faint music stirred her hearing till awake
Her glances silvered from her tardy bed.
Then wakefulness blushed with a warmer beam;
Life kissed her form and in her footstep spake;
And Day sprang up enthralled and ravished.
She fled, yet smiled from mounts and over glades;
Sprang through the forests and awoke the shades.
In vain his ardor; yet he chased and leaped,
In the elusive fragrance of her tresses steeped.

The Willows

(GRAND-PRÉ)

THE suns may come, and men may stand
To gaze beneath thy shade, and feel thy breath,
As of a voice that speaketh not of woe,
Unwitting of the pitying eye, the reverent hand,
Beside the unmarked field of death,
Indifferent as thou to friend or foe.

The tides shall lift always, nor day
Nor night shall urging lip or threatening word
Prevail, ceaseless the vigilance of dyke;
And children fearless in the scented grass shall play
Where once the river pierced like sword,
Seaward withdrawn only again to strike.

And winds shall murmur as the tide
Within the creeks and grass-grown riverways;
And shores shall stir as oft in centuries
Long past they stirred when floods upon their bosom died,
Before your shadows widened, days
And nights beneath the summer skies.

And over all the level earth
Where plow and scythe have never cut in vain,
You see unchanged the ancient faithfulness
Of soil without a fallow field, each summer's birth
Joying young motherhood again,
With sweet maturing comeliness.

THE WILLOWS

For all the sorrow and the tears
That shall remain for hearts to feel again,
Eyes oft shall see and dim at your unspoken tale,
You shall not speak the doubts that die not with the years,
You shall be dumb to hearts of men
Who gloat where once strong souls did fail.

Cruel axe and fire, and fatal years
Have tried your strength and life's vitality,
Each twig a scion ready for the earth.
So are they now despite the anguish of their tears,
Their teachers have been earth and sea,
So have they come again to birth.

The name they gave to all Grand-Pré
Shall know them living when your end is death,
Though nevermore these dykes shall feel their feet.
Their life is strength no fate shall slay;
The breath they drew was living breath;
Their toil their nurture and their meat.

To the Singers of Minas

I.—RAND

THOU, long a poet at no lyric shrine,
Madest not a prayer to any muse or power.
Unsung the seasons passed as but an hour,
Until the evening of the day was thine.
Then lips unsilent moved with verse divine;
And Minas added thine unto her dower
Of song, thy words unfolding like a flower,
From thy harmonious spirit pure and fine.
Fundy and Blomidon, and the dark Isle,
And those great currents running far and fleet,
Were long begetting forces for the birth
Of Song that filled thy singing-while.
And these black hills shall voice the hearts that greet
Thee, sweet new Singer, given late to earth.

II.—ROBERTS

Is green walled Acadie a later Greece,
And thou a classic come to life again
From thy historic home to modern men
In this green world of beauty and of peace?
A sculptor then, a poet now, whose lease
Of labor is to carve and chisel clear
Each lyric shape, until not song I hear,
But see the spirit from the stone's release.
The broad green levels of thy Tantrammar
Seem but the Tempe of thy ancient time.
The tides, and all the Fundean crystal ways
Are as thy blue Ægean was in far,
Dim yesterdays; and all the suns that climb
This sky knew thee in Helle's brightest days.

III.—CARMAN

Thou mystic singer whose spontaneous song,
Vague as the tide-tones of the Fundy floods,
Sweet as the sweetest singer of the woods—
Thou, too, hast raised thy lyric voice among
The places where the ebb and flood so strong
Fill with red life the veins of Acadie;
And in thy wandering voices call to thee
Sad with remembrance of the deathless wrong.
And thou art in the circle of the few
Who tune their voices to these singing meads,
And know the assonance of shore and tide,
And the swift stroke of wavelet slipping through
The grasses; learning from the river reeds
The deepest chorus of the ocean wide.

IV.

The dyke-lands and the meadows of the sea
That fill with joy the circles of our day;
The long red rivers widening to the bay;
The Gaspereau's unmoved serenity,
Beside that place of crime and misery,
Marked by the hallowed willows of Grand-Pré;
The plowing Blomidon,—shall ever play
Their phases in the souls of you and me.
And here has love uprisen into song,
And filled our hearts with yearning, and the glow
Of larger life. Where that hate was of yore
That made our fathers foemen, now grows strong
The pride of peace; although the flow
Of tears has marked the whole red reach of shore.

The Sowing

As down the centuries the shining share
Has laid the earth's warm bosom bare,
A holy sacrifice, a season's care;
When radiant blossoms from the sod
Lift towards the sun as souls lift unto God,
Making divine the earth's most humble clod,—
How shall a patience infinite
Ingather all the season's dew and light,
And turn the darksome earth to blossom white!
How earth shall hold the germ within the dark,
Forever sightless to the fluttering of the lark,
Yet reaching to the warming of light's spark,
Uncounted when the harvest ripe and sweet
Yields to the touch that marks his feet,
Untold the years the lips of man shall greet!
So shall the shaping rounds of man arise
As harvests of unceasing centuries;
The earth an inspiration in the light of skies.
And labor's wisdom shall go down from sire
To sons, and sons of sons, in quenchless fire.
And earth shall nurture the desire,
And he who shall not clasp her in his need
Shall hunger till his spirit bleed,
Till night shall darken on his fruitless seed.

In the Rain

WITH the new hay, a dripping, scented load,
Comes the slow ox-team with a noiseless tread
Through the thick rain with bent, unswerving head,
Toiling along the soft and silent road.
Across the dyke the ripened hay, windrowed,
Lies all deserted, where the toilers sped.
The dyke-road winding to the leaning shed
Has but a solitary, hopping toad.
Adown the wide and grass-grown village street,
The last dark phantom pair of steaming steeds
Leap headlong toward the open barn, with chains
That rattle louder than their rapid feet.
Until the tide has left the swaying reeds
High on the marsh, the morning through, it rains.

A Shower

THE morn is moody and the clouds brood low,
While a soft expectation fills each place
Where grasses lean and flowers droop like lace.
The air is vacant, and no breezes blow.
The thunder for an hour rolled far and slow;
Then with the first cool gust that swept my face,
From the dim west with quick increasing pace,
The rain fell round me with a rustling flow.
The grass is waving and no flower mourns.
From secret places, fresh and fragrant balm
Fills every dusty road and hidden lane.
Earth sighs as the soft hand of heaven turns
The draught upon her lips. Even the calm
Blue hills stir musically in the rain.

A Monument

WHERE lie their dead, then decently interred,
Though long no stone has marked their resting-place,
Where to a living death their kin and race
Were sacrificed, unheeded and unheard
Their sorrows and their wails, a poet's word
Has limned white pages trace on trace,
As by blood-tears the sorrows of a face,
One grief for all the agony that stirred.
Evangeline, the monument of soul,
And spirit brooding over all the land,
Carven imperishable for man to read
When you, old willows, in the dyke-dust roll,
Reduced to ash, although to-day you stand
To moan her grief of heart ever to bleed!

The Acadian Exile

WHERE are the hands to guide the waiting plow;
To sway the lumbering oxen with a stroke,
Now waiting at the bars for band or yoke?
An exile curst, as with a branded brow.
The kindly walls that cannot shield him now
Are black in embers that have ceased to smoke,
Wrapt tenderly with marsh-fogs as a cloak.
The willows shade no gables where they bow.
This wandering exile from dead Acadie
Sees through the mist of sorrow never done
That mercy has no hand held out to save.
Yet ne'er again the meadows of the sea
Mayhap shall know this heart-sore, weary son,
Denied the kindness of an alien grave.

The Call of the Earth

WHITHER go ye now, entering the shadows,
The plow in the half-turned furrow, and the whole
Broad sod unmarked, uncut, the oxen in the stall.
And now thy sire, too old to guide them yoked,
Sees the young forest break upon the hill,
Sees the rank alder reach across the field.
Have ye lost the ancient courage and the faith
Of soul that burned to battle with the earth,
That builded to the end of all its toil?
Wouldst breed a brood to feed upon the blood,
Blind unto tears, that heeds no children's cry?
Go seek your manhood in the fallow field,
And learn your strength within the royal wood!
Wait for your wage till suns have ripened days
Of gold, and spilled the joy to all the world.
Yes, wait your wage with suns that rise upon
The green, keel-furrowed levels of the sea.
See the great patience of the growing tree,
With precious burden of the redding fruit.
Joy in the color of the lifting wheat;
Bare neck and arms unto the rising sun;
And see the furrows cut from wood to shore;
The strength and spirit of the vital dawn,
Down through the manhood of your later years,
The sturdy vigor of your loins renewed,
Within the sinews of your many sons.

Bobolinks

A FLASH of gold and jet, then bubbling throats,
From meadow-fence and dyke fill up the breeze.
List and bethink! These are not reveries
In song, nor passion shaped in silver notes.
The warble's expectation never floats
Beyond the reach of wing. The melodies
Seek not the past, nor pierce futurities.
These happy spirits wrapped in glossy coats
Hear Nature's gentle calling and reply.
Canst thou not see, within each feathered thing
There is a life that looks nowhere beyond
To unattempted songs and heights of sky?
In each quick moment, eager voice and wing
Find life's sweet acme holding breath in bond.

The Marsh

THE suns and shadows of thy seasons many
Have not upraised thee from thy low estate,
Nor made thy heavy pulses fluctuate,
Through quickening sunlight and long hours rainy.
Against thy side the sea's strong arm falls puny;
Upon thy breast vain is the creek's far flow;
The measuring march of rivers' tidal glow;—
Only the sky can span, agloom or sunny.
When grasses wave, or all is wrapped in snow,
There comes to thee no glad awakening,
Beneath the flight of days and flow of tides.
The wafting wings that circle thee are slow,
And seldom voice disturbs the gathering
Of days wherein thy purpose calmly bides.

The First Robin

A ROBIN came to-day with earliest dawn,
And whistled through the orchard-avenues,
A bare and birdless scope of clinging dew.
From tree and shadowy fence the plumage shone
Of this sole singer, while through lane and lawn
He called me not in vain to hear the news
He brought to-day unto the misty views;
And then his whistle and his wing were gone.
The piping said not whence, or why he came,
Before a bud is broken on a tree,
While yet the brooks are icy, and the cold
Clings to the earth. His breast was like a flame
In the dull morn; his calling seemed to be
For Life, not yet awake in field and wold.

Aftermath

BUT late I saw the mower's marching sweep
Lay bare and dry from upland to the tide
The whole green dyke. Even the bright hill-side
In scattered rose and golden-rod lay deep.
Swift wheeled the busy birds of prey, to leap
Through the bright sunlight nowhere now denied,
Where thick and close the shielding grasses dyed;
And the full barns the sweet hay-odors keep.
Then night shed rain on the uncovered fields,
Lying in barrenness, a stubbly waste,
Where like a razing fire the scythe has been.
To-day the aftermath renews and shields
All the denuded dykes with kindly haste,
And everywhere again the plains are green.

Song of the Pestilent Creek

A FOUNDLING cut off from the sea
Who had sired and suckled me, too,
I have grown but an outcast to be,
With a hatred that nought will undo.

I have looked for the river a bride,
I have slept in the touch of his face.
In the bloom of my youth I have died,
In the sound of his outgoing pace.

I have listened with hate for his call,
But to weep for the sound of his voice;
For the touch that is never to fall
On my neck when my laugh would rejoice.

Oh, the long cursèd years of my wait;
And the fearful last cry of my hope;
And the heaven that darkened with hate;
And the hate that outdistanced my scope!

Oh, the long summer siege of the sun
That burned all my madness to blaze;
That gave me a work never done,
And a curse for the rest of my days!

SONG OF THE PESTILENT CREEK

And I mingled my breath with the mirth
Of the harvesting meadows of marsh,
Till death-seed of my sowing had birth;
And each hope of my hatred was harsh.

Oh, the night-long brooding with death,
When the stars seemed to shudder with fear;
When the fumes of my fever-hot breath
Bore no voice for the marshes to hear!

For the killing the quiet was sure;
And my touch not an infant could feel;
And my curse not a maid could endure
When I placed on her lips the dark seal.

So the germ of my doling was fed
For the pestilent harvest of ill;
For the life of new sorrow was bred;
And a grief never ceased that may kill.

I have heard in the gloat of my night
That a death of my making was come;
And the thing called a soul took to flight;
And a voice that had stirred me was dumb.

And the toy that went drifting all day
On the dead blackened stream of my face,
Shall not bring me the laughter of play,
Shall never again know this place.

And why shall I long, or regret
That the step of the master is gone?
There is manhood to bend to me yet;
And smiting of maids to be done.

SONG OF THE PESTILENT CREEK

And I see all the blindness of greed;
And the shunning and fear of the strong;
And the folly of poverty's creed,
In the hope of sweet life to be long.

And they aid me with madness for gain,
Till I strew the black seed of my hand.
Soon my harvest is terror and pain,
And a grief that shall sow all the land.

So the strength that was purposed for good
I shall turn to undoing and death;
Till from the sea to the far purple wood
Will no place be unmarked of my breath.

Willows

WILLOWS whisper strange, this noon, with green
And gentle wavings. Pools and shadows merge
Beneath the branches, where the rushes lean
Or stumble prone; and sad along the verge
The marsh-hen totters. Strange the branches play
Above the snake-roots in the dark and wet,
Adown the hueless trunks, this summer day.
Strange things the willows whisper. List, mine ear,
Mayhap some story-wind would have thee hear.
I know the breeze that softly murmurs so
Hath sought this place, returning like the sun
To linger in the valley, where the flow
Of tide and season fills and falls; begun
And ended many a nameless year. Again
Unheeded and again unheard, a tale
May freight these dreamy breezes of the vale.
Unvoiced I listened, and I heard with pain;
So sad the voice, so sad the story told:

WILLOWS

“ Oh, willow! true hath been my heart, and long
I waited for the bird with wing of gold
To mate among thy branches, and whose song
Should tell me of my love's return.
The branch he broke while yet my breast did burn
With all its love and pain. The vow
He uttered, ‘ Ere this branch we lovers set
Becomes thrice higher than thy tender brow;
After the yellow-wing her brood shall get,
I will come back to thee.’ My frequent glance,
A loving maiden left in Acadie,
Hath asked of thee, What keeps my love in France?
Thy branches all this while, from twig to tree,
Have been my hope; but now the tree hath borne
A nest and happy two, and just this morn,
Ah me, they fled!” This was the breeze's strain.
I lingered yet, but listened all in vain.

Willows old and deathless near the fence
Crooked everywhere, here tottering to their fall,
Half hid in golden-rod and grasses tall
Along the marshes. Winding-rutted thence
The road leads seaward where the anchor clings
And seine-poles split the eddy. On the hill
A lake lies blue. The swallow's dipping rings,
And wavelets play among the leaves that spread,
Or sink cool swathed along the hidden trunk.
Brown-skinned urchins 'mong the willows spill
Within the shade with pleasure drunk,
Afloat in azure fallen from the sky;

WILLOWS

Plucking the lilies, once the heaven's stars.
Before the glossy hair is dry,
Late drenched like lily leaves, boy skill prepares
The willow-pipe to speak a noisy note;
Or, merman-like, with ringlets all afloat,
Among the flowers joins the swollen throat
Of stranded frog, or drowns his song. Red lips
Apart with song and laughter; eyes that glance
Into the sun; and pipes that play all day
The tunes that come with happy chance.
The heart-song through the whistle slips,
And like the echo dies away.
The breezes rustle with the old-time voice;
The laughter lags, the pipe-notes will not stay;
We drift beyond the walls of yesterday,
Where songs still linger and must long rejoice.
Sing, piper, on thy willow-reed sing clear!
Waft, breezes, wing me till my youth be near!
Sing, willows, shake my heart-strings into chords,
Intenser for the absence of the words!
Piper, breezes, willows, I am living
In the heaven of your giving.

Fire-Flies

THE day of sunshine and of song awakes
The chambers of remoter lands; while here
The everlasting worlds on high shine clear
Through the broad night; and the unrolling brakes,
And undefined levels, like dark lakes,
Glimmer and glow with life far off and near—
Winged forms invisible that mark the mere
With floating lines and falling fiery flakes.
The world is stilly on this summer night,
Nor eye may see that labor is not done,
Although the day has wafted from the sky.
Here everywhere pierce myriad lines of light.
I see His radiance glorious as a sun
In each revealing glimmer, quick to die.

The River-Tide

SOFT wandering eyes of brown have watched the tide
Slip out, until the river sings again;
The musk-rat gliding upward to his den,
Hid in the dyke's high slope, and darker side.
The deeper dusk has filled the valley's wide
Green lining; and the shad-bug's pencil-mark
Of fire cuts straight across the deepest dark;
The evening stars close to the mountain side.
And the soft windless air is balmy sweet,
Though bobolink and robin do not sing.
Without the tide, the stream has fallen down
To a dark waveless pool beneath our feet.
Her eyes yet gazing upon everything
Have changed to black, which ere the dusk were brown.

Marsh Meadows

IN the green level plain
Is the track of the tide
Where the breezes give rein
To abandon, and ride
Till commotion is wide;
And the cloud-shadows run
With the glints of the sun.
In the whole sea of grass
Is an ocean where breezes make waves as they pass.

Oh, the golden glad light
Of the sea o'er the fields;
Of the blossoming white,
And the fruitage it yields;
And the dyke-line that shields
All the life of the land;
And the rushes that stand
By the creek's placid play
With a memory of tides on a sea far away!

What a harvest for man
In the sheafing of grain,
In the days' fallen span,
In the clover's sweet stain!
On the whole golden plain,
In the full granary
Is the sound of the sea;
And the loading that floats
Are to me but the slow even sailing of boats.

MARSH MEADOWS

In the sunshine abroad
 There is sweet minstrelsy;
And the finger of God
 Leaves a trace on the sea;
 And the salt breeze is free
As a wing on the tide;
And the flooding is wide
 On the marsh's broad floor
Where the echo is caught of the ocean's faint roar.

The Southern Storm-Voice

INTO the silence of this leafless close,
 From the great hollow day, the noises float:
 The unseen crows anear that mock and gloat;
The rustling passage of the tidal floes.
In the dark south a voice of warning grows,
 Cut by the mud-team driver's urging throat,
 And with increasing power the roaring note
Comes in, as of a beast that moans and lows.
The windless air is humid; and at rest
 Are the dark heavens to their hazy edge.
 A wordless premonition I can feel
Of snow that has not come; as of a guest
 Long looked for—even now above the ridge
 The air is filled with flakes that spin and reel.

A Homestead

(WINTER)

I FOUND the fullest days of summer here
Between these sloping meadow-hills and yon;
And came all beauty then from dawn to dawn,
Whether the tide was veiled or flowing clear.
To-day in snowy raiment nowise drear
Thou liest peaceful, as with hair undone,
And every jewel aside. Thou dreamest on,
Till gently waked by the new-flowering year.
Old trees and walks will never make thee old,
For years add beauty to a peaceful age.
Thou art amidst all change the same, and strong;
Crowning the whole broad view that lies outrolled:
The mountain and the sea thy heritage
To keep thee beautiful; to keep thee young.

Leafless

From dawn to gloaming, and from dark to dawn,
Dreams the unvoiced, declining Michaelmas.
O'er all the orchards where a summer was
The noon is full of peace and loiters on.
The branches stir not as the light airs run
All day. Their stretching shadows slowly pass
Through the curled surface of the faded grass,
Telling the hours of the cloudless sun.
From some near branch a crow invisible
Breaks the warm silence with a mocking cry,
And stirs the quivering distance of the day.
The startled noon awakes as from a spell;
And from afar comes a soft melody,
The melancholy cadence of a jay.

The Making of the Marshes

LONG the waters of heaven
 Shall lift you,
 And drift you,
 And sift you,—
Beget in you infinite leaven
 For all the far ages.
 Fertility's wages
 Shall come from the rages
Of mountain lashed cycles long,
 Over and under,
 Shocked sky-wide with thunder,
 Till rock break asunder,
And torrents sweep strong.
None shall guess in your song
How the powers of heaven-smit earth,
And the ocean's black frenzy forlorn,
Brought the sweet of your life into birth,
Fecundity slowly begotten and born;—
How the tides of the ocean made play,
Whimsical, lavish display,
 Of their strength, of their fleetness and power;
 Of their dearth, of their gift, of their dower;
Meadow and river-marge under the sea;
Of the shift at a nod; of the large mystery
That enshrouds you—
 That makes you—
 That breaks you—
 That fickle oft takes you
Where black shore close crowds you.

THE MAKING OF THE MARSHES

The uplands shall feed you,
Where grasses shall seed you,
And red rivers bleed you,
 From the slow-melting mountains forever,
 From the countless earth-fountains forever,—
For harvests unnumbered sown deeply and well,
 In the loins of the land. Who shall tell
 How the bounty of seasons shall swell;
Like a fountain of myriad jets shall be sweet—
Every blade, every blossoming flower,
Like the sun everlasting with power,
To expand, to unroll, to repeat
Every pulse of earth's infinite beat;
Far greater than season, or tempest, or tide,
 That lift you and make you,
 That rift you and break you,
That cast you adrift in the waters to ride.
You lift from the depths through the cycles of day
And of night, but a stain in the tide
 To whirl and to glide
Till the waters flood clear and you lay
Yourselves low as the plaything of time
 And the eons of clime,
From the torrid to frigid and on
To the temperate zone
From the centuries raised into birth,
Salt meadows for rivers to girth.
So the day shall arrive
When as often as spring, shall return, all alive
With the harvests of summer, shall smile
On your bosom soft mile after mile,
Deep rooted forever the sod,
Sea-meadows uplifting as souls unto God.

Change

THE early crows slow down the dyke-lands fly,
A sombre troop upon the heels of dawn;
While fog-thick breezes dim the morning sky,
Ere yet the trailing skirts of night are gone.

The drowse of dawn clings to the early hours,
To the neglected scenes and gardens bare,
So fragrant late with plenteousness of flowers,
Now scant of bloom, and silent everywhere.

The stubble and the fallow fields of sod
Yield to the share their lines of mellow earth,
Wherein is stored the deathless fruit of God,
For man's begetting patience to bring forth.

The tide flows seaward as the day expands,
And the slow Autumn waking fills the day;
And when the fallen flood rolls from the sands
There is no sign of languor or decay.

While yet the earth is silent as in dreams,
Only to man whose hand is strong she yields;
To give her fruitage in unending streams
From the vast store of her abounding fields.

CHANGE

The season reigns with the soft calm of rest
O'er the whole marshland in the sun's full rays.
Each night that earlier floods the golden west,
Each dallying dawn, comes with a newer phase.

The West inpours a flood of softened air,
And brims the land with subtle charms and sweet,
Then Nature's quiet wanes with all her care,
And Autumn glorious roves with laughing feet.

She lingers long with Night, and bends her eyes,
With every sun returning, to the north,
Expectant of the white-clad cavalries,
And wan and wistful waits their coming forth.

She stills the waking bud and reds the thorn,
And dyes the forest over vale and steep.
She looks upon the eyes of languid Morn,
And makes her coming late and calm her sleep.

Oft are the raging winds upon the plains,
Breathing decay upon the dulling land;
And wafting fogs, like cold, unfallen rains,
Come with the tides upon the birdless sand.

The woods are stricken, and the parting song
Of birds no longer wakes the misty dawn.
The lakes are waveless-black the hills among,
And stiller since the laughing loon has flown.

Now with the night again, through all its hours,
The waft of a cold wind sweeps o'er the woods;
And morning breezes thick with leafy showers
Strew field and forest, and bedeck the floods.

CHANGE

Like thin-draped Poverty with bending form
Scarce hid beneath the tatters of her dress,
Appear the willows moaning in the storm,
Unpitied in their shivering nakedness.

Again the night's far sky is bright with stars,
But a cold trance has stilled the breeze's breath.
Beneath the morn all stricken unawares
Lies the whole land in sombre robe of death.

What need of shade along these waysides now,
Of arching boughs, and eye-delighting green?
No longer noon-day burns the laborer's brow;
Bare are the vacant fields of fruit and sheen.

The harvest-days have left the orchards bare;
The nights are longer, and the sun runs low.
The eager hunter for the chase prepares,
To seek the forest with the moon's full glow.

The lofty hawk no longer meets the night,
Cutting the twilight with a noiseless wing.
About the spire no swallow curves in flight,
On calm, fruit-smelling airs of evening.

The gloaming has no bat, the gloom is dead;
No dreaming bird trills short a midnight lay.
The heavens hang with frozen stars o'erhead,
And chill until the coming of the day.

Where laughter rolls along the frozen lake
The woods have lost the silence and the gloom.
While youthful blood is flowing joy will wake
Beside the sign of death and touch of doom.

CHANGE

The time was good; the land may calmly rest
When Winter whitens all the silent ways.
The warmth of life again will move her breast,
To waken and restore in other days.

The seasons live their days of loss and gain—
Mild Spring like youth, and Summer like a queen;
Ripe Autumn has a brief and changeful reign
Ere Winter's snowy mantle sweeps the green.

Charged with the sun the everlasting sod,
Holds one seed precious if it shall beget,
And through the multitude reach up to God;—
Life has its fate in a far future set.

Death shall not end it, even though the thread
Break when the blossom as the soul be gone.
Death is a phase of life, as overhead
A cloud fades in the everlasting sun.

And man shall find his labor never done,
How oft the sower shall have cast in vain—
Beginnings end if well or ill begun,
And falls the thistle with the ripened grain.

Absent

ART thou fled, my companion; no echo remains in the
shadows,

Sombre and still in the wood of thy warblings tender
and strong?

Where by the lakes or the rivers, where in the pastures
and meadows,

May the lost singer be sought without the monition of
song?

Peace and the heart-joy remain from thy lay of the eve
and the morning,

Given unasked, as the perfumes that flow and go waft-
ing unknown.

Haply, some soul has received it, hardened with pride
and with scorning,

Sweetening the spirit forever in a way that may never
be shown.

Beauty is swept from the flowers, and grain from the
stalks that are broken;

Chill is the breath of the breeze, tho' the sun shone a
summer through.

Yet there is place in the heart for a word so long ago
spoken;

Remembrances stay when the days go not back nor their
labors undo.

ABSENT

Harsh is the voice of the sea; and the fog on its face set
with frowning,

Rolls away from the shore as with curses, not to return.
Well thou art silent and gone, here calm in the tumult is
drowning;

Tenderness lost like childhood in manhood sullen and
strong.

Many a heart like mine for thee perhaps is calling,
For the places of light and song have become a solitude.
Where is thy summer of song that gladdened the sunbeams
falling,

Filling the air afar, and echoing from the wood?

Southward thy wing and thy warble flit among branches
and flowers,

Born with a passion not dead, nor to sleep with the end
of a song;

Never to pause while the seasons garner the minutes and
hours,

Frailest and shyest of singers, one 'mid the summer's
throng.

Art thou forever gone, or soon to return to my hearing?

Never were fields and floods like the floor of our summer
skies.

Teach me once more in the Spring; teach me to utter
unfearing,

Sweet as thou singest ever, the songs that shall ever rise.

In the Gaspereau Valley

THE rippling river ceased to sing, with flow
Quick-speeding downward to the red-shored Bay;
For now the tide has found the tortuous way
Between the hills where orchard blossoms blow;
And the green dykes and meadows are aglow
With th' even radiance of a golden day.
The waters' hush is strange; and the last lay
Of unseen cat-birds ripples to and fro.
The day is gone, and with a lingering hand
The sea's dark fingers press upon the shore.
The bat has risen into broken flight
Above the bridge, and darts from strand to strand.
The silence deepens over me; while more
And more I feel the fulness of the night.

Departure

LONG have I lingered where the marshlands are,
Oft hearing in the murmur of the tide
The past, alive again and at my side
With unrelenting power and hateful war.
Here in the calm of dykes that spread afar
Their summer green, or winter snow, hate died,
And burning rage, in peace that bids me bide—
In steadfast love that guides me like a star.
Ye summer meadows, and ye winter plains,
That knew my hapless race, I go
As one who lived beneath his father's roof;
Who heard at eve the slow-returning wains;
The far, soft melody of bleat and low;
The nearer noisy shuttle in the woof.

Sowing

I LAID within the fecund earth
The dry potential seed,
In season of creating and of birth
When sun and earth would breed.
The land lay mellow to my hand
Ripe for the sowing after rain.
The plow had turned the virgin land
Unknown of seed and grain.
I saw the lusciousness of reed
Within the brook.
I saw the axe-smit birches bleed
Blood-red ere life forsook.
I saw the eager salmon leap
Out of the tidal rush;
The wooing birds' sweet chirp and cheep
In every flowering bush.
I saw the mated blue-wings glide
Within the creek's deep mouth;
I saw a goose lift o'er the tide,
Belated from the south.
I noted the slow herons' flight
Into the wood;
And felt the summer's tingling of delight
Within my own warm blood.
I felt the fatherhood of sun
And earth and air and heaven above,
And the creating call of God begun
Within my soul and o'er the earth of love.
And every living thing elate
Gave sign of the young summer in the sky;
Even the snake and her young brood upon the slate
Were sunning in a moveless ecstasy.
The seed I thus cast out abroad from out my hand
Was life I gave the ready land,
As if earth spirits waked from sleep
Were called to share where man should reap.

Return

SINGER of hope and of peace, soul of the dawn and the gloaming,

What will deny us joy beneath the whole blue sky?
Never the greens of Spring; never the blossoms coming,
Soft with the breath of June when thy fullest song is high.

Never the sweep of the grain to the cloud-libation pouring,
Here where afloat and afield the season's reign is good.
Never the sea-breeze and land-breeze that take thy song a-soaring,

Calmly as Dawn sweeps the hill, or as Night slips out of the wood.

Never the breath of fogs with a sail just in from the ocean,
Drifting with song and swing to the quay spray-wet in the tide;

Nor the sweet noon-rest from toil, nor evening's soothing potion,

Life just learning to live in the glories that shall abide.

Happiest singer of Spring-birds, each of thy lays seeming sweeter,

Tells to me over and over the things that have gone with a year.

Every rhapsodic strain slips eagerly fuller and fleeter—
Remembering, my answer is silence; my welcome, the joy as I hear.

RETURN

What will deny us more when this virgin time is older?

Never the promise it makes of the loveliness yet to be:
Then will be strength of growth, and feeling deeper and
bolder;

Summer abroad like a woman proud in maturity.

None shall deny that I claim thee, just back from a winter
of winging,

Here in the early morn thy throat is first to greet;
Giving once more to my ear thy richest old-time singing:
Making the silence stir; making the day's heart beat.

When on the ledge's breast the tidal rage is lulling,
Mid-day biding near, flushed with its own display;
When the lake is waveless, and lilies droop for culling,
Yet will thy note be sweet and joyfully fill the day.

Speech awake that was dead; a word come back that was
spoken;

Love retold with a hope that brightens when almost
gone;

So came thy early song like a strain from a string that
was broken,

Stirring the dull of night with the hastening flow of
dawn.

Calm with the truth of life, deep with the love of loving,

New, yet never unknown, my heart takes up the tune;
Singing that needs no words, joy that needs no proving,
Lapsing in one long dream as Summer bides with June.

RETURN

Often I listen and wonder, when gently thy warble is ended,
Whether language is truer than the strains of a bird-
made song.

Hath ever man sung as you sing, eagerly mellow and
splendid,

Yet singing alone for the singing, unconscious how
sweet and strong?

Uttering unconscious of rhythm, in waves of inspiration,
Full of the passion that guides and bids the song to
swell;

Seeking no lover to listen to pleasure's pure elation;

Seeking the whole true song, unknowing how ill or how
well.

Here is our dearest theme where skies are blue and
brightest;

To sing a single song in places that love it best;

Freighting the happy breeze when snowy clouds are lightest;

Making a song to cease not when the singer is dumb in
rest.

Flooding the loveless heart with a strange and unknown
fire;

Love, and the passion to live making deep the theme
of the song—

This is thy mission, sweet singer, so speak to the strings
of my lyre;

Dull and untuned is my heart, till its voice be awakened
and strong.

Midsummer

THE eventide is hushed, and back to rest,
Along the moody hills where oat-fields sigh,
The dilatory winds waft sleepy by.
The day is festal in the curtained west,
And opens wide its halls and chambers dressed
In colors' splendidness, as if the sky
Gave honor to the earth's maturity;
While Night stands in the east with rayless breast.
Content fills every scene the vision takes
Unto itself. Its calm reigns everywhere
In fruitful luxury of field and hill.
There comes a signal-song, a frog awakes
And stirs the stilly dusk; then all the air,
As Night comes near, the chorus-pipings fill.

The Broken Dyke

FROM the far ocean, hour after hour,
Inflowed the waveless and quick-rising flood;
Until the marsh-reeds like a storm-struck wood,
Beneath the murky waters curve and cower.
The tortuous dyke-wall, crowned of grass and flower,
That has a century of tides withstood,
Leans hard to-night against the sea-front rude,
Awaiting the great current's fullest power.
In vain the strength and virtue of its years!
O'er fence and furrow, through the broken walls,
Across the verdant fields, the tide has thrown
Its torrent arms; and the awed listener hears
Through the deep night the herds' mad cries and calls,
As the fierce river leaps to claim its own.

My First Locust

THE morning has a kingbird with its flight
To heaven, feeding on the wind; and loud
From dyke-lands rolling under grassy cloud
Comes the sharp buzzing of the mower's bite.
The locust in the elm sings his delight,
And clears my heart as from a wrapping shroud,
Amid these many fruitful gardens bowed
With God's own vintage of the summer's height.
So is my summer in its growth supreme,
With all this world's enrichment green and gold,
And merging into day of perfect love.
The locust sings as in my life's first beam
The song that does not die and is not old,
With God-taught truth wherein my faith shall move.

A White Butterfly

OH, wondrous act of nature, thou sweet thought,
Just recreated to a rapturous beam
Of fluttering whiteness, thou shalt always seem
The symbolizing hope of common lot.
Like many a soul upon this earthly spot,
Haply thou seest as in doubtful dream,
Too faintly drawn for any thought or theme,
The earlier life that is not all forgot.
And all thy beauty's utmost destiny
Knows not a jot of that proud rage that clings
To man's ambitious soul, nor dies nor yields;
Yet art thou sweeter to my loving eye,
Arrayed in purity of white, with wings
That linger ever in the common fields.

The Marsh-River

THE river banks red-bright beneath the sun
Lay empty to the breeze which like a stream
Flowed softly downward to the tide out-run,
Sweeping across the flats that idly dream,
Then drifted out to sea. Shortwhile the tide
Lay moveless where the river opened wide
Its mouth unto the Bay with thirsty throat
Agape and red for the long quenching draught
Of foaming brine. Shortwhile the anchored boat
Drew not upon the chain, and all the craft
Lay to against the turning of the flood,
Low tide marked by the heron and her brood.
Without a sign of finger or of lip,
The tide turned inward from the outer sea.
The hidden anchor feels the drawing ship,
The fisher craft let all their sails go free:
Up to the river rises the quick flood,
Into the marshes' vein like pulsing blood,
Gateways of ancient mould, thence to the hoar
Gray, granite hills of primal time to store
The tidal elements. Thus has the deep
Made him a beast of burden, treading slow
Through centuries with toil that cannot sleep,
And front unyielding to the winter's snow,
Nor lingering under all the summer's sweep
Of hot alluring rays; bound to no power
In earth or heaven save that which times the hour
Of night and day to lift his reddened knee
And mighty shoulder out of ocean's mine
To tread the marshy stairway of the sea,
And strew his burden at the secret sign;

THE MARSH-RIVER

Blind eyes that know no pity and no tear,
Nor wist that in the silent centuries
Of plodding to the mountain's stony knees,
What weary miles of needless footway bear
His mark of winding road and broken way.
And when the sea shall crowd upon his heels
And level o'er the marshes his array
Of waters till the farthest dyke-top feels
The sibilance of wave, the river lost
In the supreamer power bends like the beast
And gropes shortwhile and stumbles tossed
And tripped by his great strength which ceased
Without the single purpose that must guide.
But soon again the river treads the plain,
Whether to labor up or hurry back,
Heedless of loss, unconscious of the gain,
Each cycle narrowing its track.
The purpose of his labor is complete,
When man shall reap the labor of his feet,
And lay his hand to mark his utmost way,
And bar where now his step shall cease to stray.

Gone

LOVE of my earliest love, and thou song of my earliest
singing,
Long has my heart been dumb with the hope of thy sure
return,
Hoarding the time of thy carols that yet come softly
ringing
Into my deepest soul where the faithful love-fires burn.

Bird of my hungry life, oh, turn but the glint of a feather
Into the greed of my eye that I may not weep for thee,—
Glint of one gladdest flight of all the summer weather,
From the treasure of all earth's land and the vast of the
greater sea.

Soul, I have called again, again I have called and pleaded,
Giving the breezes word that could never be dead on
earth;
Yet has my call returned unbroken and unheeded,
Bare as the stifled wind o'er the desert's deadly dearth.

Soul, I have died to hope, faint with a deadly thirsting,
Hungered and wasted with fasting, fallen with cold and
chill,
Here where thy fruit did ripen, and fountains sang to
bursting,
Bare of the sun of song till the songless day shall kill.

BUILDING THE ABOITEAU

Fate of my loveless life, forever to be grieving,
Asking in vain for thee, sweet bird, that has no soul to
live,
Almost I find a hope of thee that stills my unbelieving,
And faint my inner sight does see thy spirit voice
achieve.

Almost I feel my soul has reached and left thee of its
being,
Given thee life to be forever deathless-souled for song,
For never have my eyelids closed, untouched and all un-
seeing,
Since thy sweet warble hushed, and made for me the
summer wrong.

Building the Aboiteau

ONE step remains, one leap from shore to shore,
And hither will the tide move past no more;
One link of mightier mould to bind the chain
Of dyke in one long singleness of main
And might to stay the flooding of the sea.
One effort more of laboring beast and man,
And the great wall from bank to bank will span,
A barrier in the river's daily path
When it shall come, a fury and a wrath,
Speed in its feet and purpose unconcealed,
With fullest boast of ancient prowess sealed
In the great wound rent in the marshes' side,
Upon the creeks' quick flow turned now aside.
In the great curve of track where flat and free
Its fleetest course is made in majesty
And might each space of quickening time
Uniting all the powers of its prime.

BUILDING THE ABOITEAU

Up into steeper ways with one intent,
More fierce and quick for each impediment,
Until the farthest channels inland own
The thralldom of the sea and bear its zone
Of murky waters. Yet one effort more
Shall close forever the great earthen door,
And vainly will the angry water beat
For passage towards its marshy, ancient seat,
Ere man came near and dared to check its rise,
Among the younger of the centuries.
No more the gliding flood will find a rest
Upon the spreading marshes' tranquil breast,
Calmed by the calmness of a changeless peace
Where clamoring elements their raging cease.
From the long dyke two centuries have tried,
To meet its fellow hurrying to its side,
They soon will clasp firm hand across the rent,
Straight here and tall, there crouching low and bent,
Soon gripping fast across the river's road
Their arms will bear the waters' mighty load,
Bent ever to the brunt of endless strife,
With single purpose through unswerving life.
So will the upland join the island lone
From where the forest sits in forest throne,
Beside the flat expanse of curving shore,
Across red creeks and brooklets leaping o'er,
Out to the ramparts of the other hills,
Its level firmness leads across and fills.
Between the closing hands the space is wide,
Across the surface of the changing tide,
Now falling fleetly down to join the sea,
To come again with old-time mockery
Of curve and height and distances of plain,
Or like a guide before the broader main,

BUILDING THE ABOITEAU

Passing between the ends of this long chain
Of dyke. The time is ripe. Quick from the deep
Red bottom, where the river was, do creep
The massy bases, lifting from below,
And the dark, yawning sluice and aboiteau.
A hundred laboring oxen up and down,
Into the shallows from the upland crown,
Cast ceaseless freight of earth into the brink
Bending the last and mightiest earthy link
Across the pathway of the master sea
To bend it to an endless mastery,
Completing labor of a hundred days,—
Brave effort in success the word of praise.
Now is the tide returned with angry face
In its old way to every old-time place,
Where every obstacle is small or scorned,—
Lo! in its road an earthy gate is turned.
It gathers force and lifts its vengeful height,
Leans full against the portal with vain might.
Vain pressure of the salty forces now,
The dyke o'ertops it with its lofty brow.
So for the hours like giants in embrace,
Breast beats on breast and face is unto face.
And in the turning of the years to come
The tide will hasten as returning home,
And rise against the rough, unyielding hands,
Joined firm across the river from the strands,
Striving long while to pass the earthen gate,
Whose life is but to guard and ever wait;
While far within the sheltering of its wall
The cattle graze and endless harvests fall.
And where the salt sedge lived but for the tide,
The bloom and fruitfulness of field will bide.
And man shall gaze across the plains content,
Where tides oft flowed and mighty rivers bent.

Scowing

FROM the marsh hay-fields, owned of sea and sky,
Come the wet scow-loads, drifting with the tide;
While fragmentary breezes curl and glide
Over the silver surface lazily.
With each green burden builded broad and high
The laden scows lean clumsy, side by side.
No ripples mark their passage as they ride
In to the creek's soft landing red and dry.
The tide-deserted creek glows in the sun;
And the wet scows, now stranded on the shore,
Gape dark and empty, near a loaded cart
Drawn by two sturdy oxen, white and dun,
Which, as the evening reddens more and more,
Bend to the driver's word, ready to start.

A Dream

A SUNBEAM fell upon my drowsy eyes,
And soon within my veins its fluid gold
With glad monitions through my being rolled.
Dull days had hung like curtained mysteries,
And nights were weary with the starless skies.
At once came life, and fire, and joys untold,
And promises with violets to unfold;
And every breeze had shreds of melodies,
So faint and sweet. Upon the marsh late sere
Broke green and rippling grass and blossom-rays.
Along with Beauty came full floods once more
Of gladsome hours, laughing their pleasure near
To every sign of death; and all the ways
Brimmed with abundance where the beams down-pour.

The Naming of Acadie

At last, in some unwritten century,
Perhaps when Basque and Breton seamen came,
In a soft tongue around the lodge's flame,
Men caught the word, and bore it back o'er sea.
From lip to lip, out of obscurity
It grew, from sound unmeaning to a name,
From legend unto history and fame,
The Souriquoi's uncharted Acadie.
Albeit named across the Western sea,
How often shall new peoples fail who come
To break the solitude and lift the veil
Shrouding the forest silence, where abide
The rooftrees yet unhewn for hearth and home
Some day to rise beside an ancient trail.

Chance

THE lily broken by a passing wing
Speeds downward gently, till the waters swing
And place it where the wood and shore are still.
And it is not alone, while shadows fill
And light-seas flood with fragrance given so free;—
While the strong tide goes drifting to the sea.
Thou shalt not say, the lowly bending reed
Must bow in vain, a lonely, budless weed,
Bending upon the water till the blade
Seems like a lover, and the flower, a maid.
The wind that goes a-wandering, one day wafts
To perfect calm; and the sun-driven shafts
Shall find a welcome place. And so, beside
The reed come by the flower from the tide;

MINAS

Mayhap unwitting of the moveless wind,
Or of the sunshine where its rest is kind,—
We shall not ask the reed-blade or the flower
If this indeed is but a spirit hour
Given to us, whose moments soon must break
So sweet a dream, and find us, sad, awake.

Minas

MINAS, the region of marshes,
Built by the sea in the tide-ways,
Singing and striving forever
To thee, and outward to ocean:
Upward to calmer, red reaches,
Wooded and sweet and remote,
Purpled with balsam and spruces,
Under soft shadow of willow,
Intervals broad and grass-laden;—
Outward to sea with a power
Seldom at rest or subsiding,
Ebbing and flowing forever.
Land of the fertile marshes
Laid in the sea through the seasons
Of centuries, washed by the rains
Of heaven through numberless years,
Borne by the tireless arms of the rivers
Thrown off the shoulders of tides,
And shaped by the sea, and levelled
And built for the coming of men,
Guarded by Micmac and held
As a garden for sons to be born

MINAS

Who shall feel in their pulses
The freedom of soul, and the pride,
The right of the man divine.
As the tide-flood shall lift from the sea,
As the rivers shall draw from the hills,
So the man shall be bred for the toil
To build up his curb to the waters,
And make him a fruitful home
In the plains of the sea.
Man shall be gifted to earn
From the elements stronger than he
The strength for his living, the craft
For his joy; and nations shall gaze
On the world of the west, and their pride
Shall make envy and deepen their hate.
Land of the marshes, yet must you breed
For the years the manhood unborn
Called for the future need;
And to light with your torch
The old, darkened halls of the nations.

The Mill

THE valley downward, curves on curves unwind
Of sleepy waters sliding to the sea;
Imprisoned for a space where mill-stones grind,
Then rolling from a foamy cascade, fall
Drowsed with the even bed, still free
To move or rest. But pausing not at all,
The burrs growl o'er the meal of ripened wheat;
And whirling, ever whirling, tear and strew
The powdered grain from out their heavy jaws.
The patient miller, white from head to feet,
Into a bag the mealy mixture draws,
And feeds the hungry dogs anew.
Slow and peaceful is the miller's road,
Yet slower than the often-resting flood;
Completing labors of the sower's hand,
Who o'er the warm, dead earth strews living seed,
Whence ripened sheaves spring from the mother-land,
Returning to his toil a grateful meed.

Lescarbot

HAIL, singer of the nation's dawn,
First poet of old Acadie!
Across the cycles that have gone
We hail the shade of thee.

Three centuries have shaped the plan,
Through war and peace and bending toil,
And bred from manhood nobler man,
Son of the sea and soil.

LESCARBOT

Your heart was loyal as you stood,
To usher in the nation born,—
Unto this sea-spanned solitude,
The race bred for its morn.

The old world locked its sterner soul
Within the palace of its pride.
Religion stalked with gloomy stole,
And youth's romancing died.

The warrior and the man of God
Knocked at these primal, nameless doors,
Drew back the curtain on its rod,
To trace its mystic floors.

Knight of the spade, the scroll, the lance,
The cheerful, gallant Companie,
True son of labor and of France,
That grew in Acadie;

Knight of the hospitable round,
The new Arthurian forest cheer,
A consecrated battle-ground
For souls that cannot fear;

We hail thee singing to the sun,
When night is broken, darkness hurled,
With silence now forever gone
From this primeval world.

Port Royal looks upon the sea,
Bright with the season's gladsome flow,
And like a voice all Acadie
Is greeting Lescarbot.

The Belfry

DAY's early welcomer while yet the night
Is lingering in the groves and river-ways,
Thou heralded the hours and the days,
Out of the dust and gloom and prisoned light.
Thou knowest not the past of wrong or right,
Winging thy peals into the dark or blaze
Of heaven; calm and true thy voice that says:
"Adviennne que pourra," ever towards the light.
Thy brazen lips have waked in many a breast
A deathless spirit of sweet memories;
Called forth to joyous purposes the worth
Of heart; and o'er the faith of soul imprest
A harmony that seemeth of the skies
For him whose feet shall tread the dark of earth.

An Unmarked Graveyard

WILLOWS, whom do you guard,
Placed on the edge of the tide where the upland
Sweeps into orchards and fields?
You have stood three centuries now,
And are old with the sea and the dykes and the seasons
Of frost and of warmth, and the coming and passing of
man.
For they who took the fields of the sea for the plow,
And the levels of marsh for their gardens are gone.
And the spirit of thrift, and the vigor of soul,
Of the sons of the soil have passed into the earth,
And the harvests of their strong hands yet come
Lifting to heaven, from the everlasting root.

A Dead Willow

NORTHWARD the snow and the withering winds,
Westward the spring and the summering days,
Southward the rain, and the storms that give vigor and life,
Eastward the chills of the sea, these you have borne;
And at last in the spring you have faded and died,
Your leafage mature, and your labor half done.
This is the end. Centuries three have you seen,
Greeting the last with your strength but to die.

The Valley of Song

FROM Gaspereau to Fundy's foggy deep,
The tides have led me even as a child
At play, among the shores basaltic, wild,
Swept by the briny seas that whirl and leap;
Tracing the sands and marshes where they creep
On sedgy bosoms, or on shingles piled
Beneath the orchard-ridges tiled
With gardens sweet with songs that never sleep.

Thus have I wandered to the heights of song,
And lived the finer vision of my soul
That gave me reach of earth's deep, sacred things.
My ears have somehow caught from all the throng
Of harmonies the notes that sway, and roll
Emotions through my being till it sings.

The Sound of the Flail

LET Nature pining see her glories go,
After the sweetness of the summering days;
Die in the deepest passion of her gaze,
As any childless woman wed to woe.
It shall be man's beyond the blossom's blow
Beyond remembrance of the fall's full blaze,
When snow-scuds vanish in the brown marsh ways,
To take the fruitage from the broken row.
Across the barren fields of all the south,
On the crisp winds no longer freighting leaves,
The flail beats out the seconds of the sun.
Invisible within the barn's dark mouth
The corn is melting from the golden sheaves,
Death's promise of the life that seemeth done.

After-feed

CONTENTED through the wholesome autumn-time,
Each side the border-dyke of sedge and reed,
Sleek horse and cattle nip the after-feed,
Witless of season's round, October's prime.
From off the hills, redder with every rime
Of longer nights, the air with travelling seed
And fruity sweet ripens the belated weed,
Meadow and slope loud with the crickets' chime.
There is a chastened spirit everywhere,
As one who felt a wrong and sadly wept,
Until forgiveness smiled from soul to eyes.
I know it where the plains were stricken bare,
And orchards by the harvester were swept,
And mountain spruces reaching to the skies.

An Old Fort

HERE 'mid the monuments of toil,
Nations' ambitions, and the red,
Cruel scars of war, unanswered prayer,
Forgotten homes and nameless dead,
Green ramparts serve the peaceful herd,—
Here love shall thrive where love has bled.
How dear the duties of the home,
The laugh of children and pure faith.
Thus shall it come out of the past
Where folly ripened from the seed
And hate gave blossom its bright hue
Rooted in blood and buried deed,
Perennial clinging through the years
To history of a nation's course,
Their useless germs yet fail of birth;
Yet slowly shall it mould the fields,
And turn to mellow soil the earth.
For heaven shall water sea and land;
And every seed cast by the hand
For human blood and tears shall sow
The barren seedless sand till time
Shall touch the elements of life
And fire mixt in the earthly mould,
Earth-bands releasing to the hand,
Like latent love unsealed, and love
In hearts unfruitful of a people sped
Henceforth to rear a nation from a nation dead.
God's will a power within a word
Bidding His blossoms speak long time unheard.

The Lane

A LANE and brook together cut a grove
Of birch, one poplar pointing to the skies,
Enjoining silence for sweet melodies
Of birds beneath each warm, leaf-screened alcove,
Sacred to youth and whispered word of love
When moonbeams sift like spray before the eyes,
And lead the soul into the mysteries
Of passion and of pain, sad-joy to move.
Two centuries of toil have worn it deep,
The ebb and flow of season and of man,
Between the uplands and the dyke-lands low;
Since first the winding dykes arose to keep
The tides hemmed in within a narrowed span,
Yet eager to invade with old-time flow.

Restoration

WE stand, sweet love, beside the scattered stones
That mark where once a hearth and home have stood;
Acadian happiness that felt the rude
And ruthless blow of hate. There lie the bones,
Mayhap, of my own kindred, whence the tones
Of leafy willows come; and yonder stand
The apple-trees they set with careful hand;
While every marsh their dyking labor owns.
Now here our love forgives the hateful deed;
Forgetting not a sorrow nor a pain;
Recalling each dark page sadder than tears,
For love is reigning where their lives did bleed.
Their loss was all; yet here my life does gain
Its joyous good for all the other years.

THE TRAIL OF THE TIDE

The Trail of the Tide

My sires were sons of the sea,
Where the waters were twin with the earth;
And they strove with the tides to be free,
With the strength that they learned ere their birth.
My sires were sons of the sea;
And the tide is like blood to my veins;
And the life-span outmeasured to me
Shall be scored like the channel-cut plains.
For the suns that shall ripen the years,
And the years that shall widen my soul,
Shall be pulse to my being that bears
In its fibre the wash and the roll.
And the floods whether flowing or still;
And the river-ways singing or dead,
Shall in season be thirsty and fill,
And give life to my heart and my head.
All the flood from the rise to the fall,
All the chance that shall destine the day,
Shall speak to me quick as a call,
Creating the will to obey.
And we marshalled the powers of hand
In the turning and building of sod.
We have bound down our hearts to the land
While we lifted our souls unto God.
Though we wander afar, yet the strife
Of the tide ever fills ear and eye.
To return is the longing of life,
To be true to the sea till we die.
We have taken the sign of the sea,
As we loved, as we wept, as we died.
In the labor of shoulder and knee
Is our life in the trail of the tide.

Fundy

FUNDY, the tidal toiler out of sea,
Soft as a hand, unpitying as a sword,
Set pulsing in the heart of Acadie,
Thy building was the bidding of the Lord.

Beside this mountain poured from inmost earth,
After the ages of thy frozen sleep,
Whence came the Word that bade thy tides go forth,
To rise and fall out of the lifeless deep?

Slow was the moulding of the land, with shock
Of sharp and echoing sound upon the sea;
And storms of heaven along the treeless rock
Of hills, a desolation long to be.

How many currents of the seas rolled far
To fill thy broken channels, while the sands
Curved into shore, and rounded cleft and scar;
And rivers met thee as with clasp of hands?

Shading thy solitudes beside the wave,
Slow forests grew and flowered; and the roll
Of season served no man, and earth no grave;
Yet undeclared the sovereignty of soul.

The flooding rivers ever flowed to thee,
Through quiet uplands and green intervals,
Storing the marshes' red fertility;
Carving the granite cliffs and earthen walls.

FUNDY

Long time the tides and seasons harrowed deep,
And fertilized forever for the seed,
Until earth called her sons to sow and reap;
Life's holy labor, and its noble creed.

The cycles of thy silence, how they strove
To break into a living heart; to beat
With eager throbbing towards the end of love,
The lift of wing, the leaping thrill of feet!

Into thy tides, through centuries of flood,
Borne down from mountain warp and forest deeps,
Marshes made ready for the newer blood
Of earth's strong sons beside the western steeps.

So passed the eras of their growing powers,
In the long round of seasons and of days.
The peoples of the world lived out their hours,
Unknown to thee across the ocean ways.

Whence came the voices, then, within thy groves,
Last gift of God unto the soulless earth?
There is the cry of pain, the laugh of loves,
The strife of savage manhood from its birth.

At last, in some unwritten century,
Perhaps when Basque and Breton seamen came,
A name was heralded across the sea,
From lodge of Souriquois beside his flame.

From lip to lip called from obscurity,
Acadie, bountiful, the rich, the good;
Open to faith, *Acadie*, *Acadie*;
Region of plenty both in earth and flood.

FUNDY

This was the naming of thine Acadie,
The ancient curtains drawn, and life
And death of man and world's ambitions free
To enter in, with all its love and strife.

Though named forever o'er the westering tide,
Yet often shall the peoples fail who come
To break the forest silence, where abide
The roof-trees yet unhewn for hearth and home.

And so the bolder seamen gave thee fame,
Fundy, in Acadie, and cast their line
Into thy tides; and from thy shores they came
As from the land of promise with a sign.

The sign stirred up in hearts the ancient fire
Of primal life, lost with the pastoral tongue;
Warmed in their being earth's old-time desire
For freedom pure, no longer lived or sung.

Unto these forests which they gladly trod,
This arching sky, these mountains purpling far,
At last they came, as once, when led of God,
The men who took for guide a shining star.

They saw thy valleys golden in the light
Of the great hope of life, the sweet of peace.
They saw dominions founded, and the might
Of men and cities widen and increase.

And as you bore them, Fundy, from the sea,
'Mid all the pageantry of shore and tide,
You filled their wakened souls with mastery
Of love more loyal, and a prouder pride.

FUNDY

De Monts the noble, from the side of kings,
Bred to the halls of rank and royalty,
Sought here large skies for bold, ambitious wings,
New labors, higher hopes and ministries.

Champlain, Pontgravé, Hébert, Poutrincourt,
The heralds of their sovereign's royal right,
These were the men to enter at the door,
To throw it wide to heaven's waiting light.

Gentle and artizan, the son of toil,
The soldier, and the man of God, all came
Like seed upon the wind to this large soil,
To bear His word, the wilderness to tame.

O Baie François, they named you with high hope,
For sweetness of the home, the generous toil;
To cast the seed beside the wooded slope,
To reap the harvest of both sea and soil.

So rose Port Royal near the marshy ways,
And slow her children by the dykelands throve
And multiplied for their dark, fateful days,
True to a tender brotherhood and love.

Here was laid down the first foundation stone
To mark the building of a nation's cause;
So often raised, so often overthrown;
The play of chance, the rule of changing laws.

There shall be valor, often, on the sea,
And victory of love upon the land;
A glory shall invest His ministry,
And God become a power in human hand.

FUNDY

Whom shall kind Song address with tender word,
In that small band of soldiers of Romance,
With knee bent reverent, or with angry sword
Drawn quick for death, for glory, and for France?

Whom would the eyes behold of that bright line
Of title and of toil, upon these plains,
Where life's heroic purposes did shine
From loyal love, without reward or gains?

The rooftrees shall at last to sky uplift
And consecrate to love where youth shall learn
Of woman in her tenderness and thrift,
Where hope's sweet flame shall brightly burn.

And Acadie shall see her children plod
Through strong and faithful lives on land and sea,
Raising one voice unto a guarding God,
Firm in the faith of immortality.

Fathers shall brave the storms that gather wide
For those who wait the coming of their keels,
In dreams to kiss their children, on the tide;
And clasp the patient woman as she kneels;

Or teach their sons the humble way to God,
Within the fields beside the shining plow;
To turn with manly pride the virgin sod,
And garner seed that other hands may sow.

Yet shall their hearts bleed long a cruel pain,
After the acts of nations and of men;
The flag of hate and death shall cross the main,
And in these forests lead the sword again.

FUNDY

How great the grief of all the years to mould
The heart to hated rule, torn by long fray,
Port Royal, parent, reaching to enfold
Her offspring, Peziquid, and fair Grand-Pré!

How often from these fields the cry went forth,
Of patient hearts to France, and yet must bleed,—
Warm loves, as true as willow to the earth,
Yet swept away at last like river reed.

There shall be purpose in the flow of tears,
If heart shall warm, and softer grow the hand.
Grief shall be heritage in calmer years
In ways only the soul shall understand.

The Christ-like soul endurance is not lost
For those long centuries to come, when son
From sire unto his seed outlive the cost;
For the unborn the guerdon shall be won.

There is a tragedy in this repose,
Among these bulwarks and their tale of woe,
Here, Fundy, where thy water ebbs and flows
Up to their lines of dyke and aboiteau.

The murmuring grasses and the dykes awave,
Here where they builded and could not abide,
Shall love their name, and cherish as a grave
The places of their courage and their pride.

And evermore, beside the singing tide,
Amid these marshlands lifted from the seas,
Shall the swift currents whirl, and whisper wide,
Along calm shores their tender memories.

Champlain

(ANNAPOLIS, 1904)

CHAMPLAIN, thou glory of New France, the sea
Has pride in thee, who bred thee brave.
Builder of nations and of monarchies,
Altars and homes, across the Western wave,
Thy heart was like a hymn, for God, for King;
A soul of courage leaping to the battle ring.

Last of a sailor breed, the storm and stress
Of life made seas thy home. In Acadie
Thy fine ambition saw the wilderness
Peopled with cities, and made glad with thee,
Raising thy nation's flag and cross on high,
A tongue grown sweet under an alien sky.

O Baie François, he named you with large hope
Raised high to give his people lasting peace;
To cast the seed beside the wooded slope;
To give his race the treasure of the fleece,
The netting of the sea; and from the soil
The sweetness of the home, the generous toil.

Within the vast, unpeopled continent,
How blood shall stain the soil; and darkly mar
The pages of thy annals; nor content
The peoples till e'en here they wage their war;
Marking their hate, and gloating o'er the fall
And death of men, and savage scalping call.

CHAMPLAIN

Thy manly labors have their true reward,
For here, at last, after the centuries,
Thy name is glorified. All creeds accord
To thee the fame of lasting memories.
Thy labors were not vain to light thy name,
To praise thy deeds, and ever stamp thy fame.

Here was laid down the first foundation stone,
To base the building of a nation's cause,
How often gladly placed and yet o'erthrown.
The hand of fate wrote here her cruel laws,
Now given to peace each grass-grown battlement,
And rusting cannon in a great content.

Ebb and Flow

SOFT flows the sea to the beaches,
Swift with the birds of the wave,
Reaching and climbing to inlands,
Softer than fingers to lave;
Curling through creeks deep and crooked,
Gliding o'er levels of green,
Hiding the rounded red rush banks
That sing to the currents and lean;
Eddying back with long furrows
At the edge of the on-going tide,
Meeting a hundred blue rivers
Till every motion has died;
Flooding in power and silence,
Thrusting strong arms through the land,
Whirling the ships into harbor,
Lifting the keels from the sand;
No power shall hasten or hinder,
For inland his tribute shall be.
As swiftly the waters enter
So the tide shall return to the sea.
Ebbing again to the northward,
Southward again to the sea,
Baring the darkened rock beaches,
Slanting and wet sombrely.
Dark with the draught of red rivers
The tide takes into the seas,
Miles after miles lie dark channels
Drunk deep to the lees;

EBB AND FLOW

And mountain-born lakes,
 Begotten of cloud and of wood,
Ripples deep in the channels and rivers
 Till the turn and the rise of the flood.
Seeking the crystal wall-caverns
 Fated with crumbling days,
Till born to the changes of season
 And all the sun's fickle blaze;
Sprung from the realm of darkness
 To gaze on the passing of years,
Amethyst purple the shore
 And play with the sea as with tears.
Moving again on the marshes,
 Heaving in endless unrest,
Filling and falling forever,
 The breath of a living breast;
Hiding the white ribs of wreckage,
 Under the doom it has set;
Roaring the first oath of vengeance,
 Weeping the after regret;
Ebbing and flowing forever,
 Forever to brood on its wrongs,
Ages of dead to bemoan, and to name
 With its wave-dirge of songs.
Hither and yon with its pageantry
 Soulless to glide,
Forever laid close in the arms
 And the deathless heart of the tide;
Led by invisible hands
 From the outermost ocean of death,
To the lands where the wind is a gladness
 And life is a breath;
A man in its hope and strength,
 A woman in love,

EBB AND FLOW

Strong with all beauty and power
Which no doom may remove;
Ebbing and flowing forever,
Giving and gathering all;
Bent to the beck of no hand,
To the will of no call.
Seaward the ship points her bowsprit
Into the roadways beyond,
Dim and wave-broken and distant,
To fortune and failure in bond.
High hangs the figure-head "Onward,"
Looking across to the shore;
Hopeful forever, till terror fall dead
In the billowy roar.
Tides and eternity linger not here,
Yet the fisherman's line
Hangs all day, his face in the wind,
His hands in the brine;
Night-time and day in the clutch of the sea
And the lumbering hours,
Where fury abides with a sleepless hand
On the leash of the powers.
A limitless flow, a limitless deep,
And a limitless green—
Where is the finish of things to be
Though the first has long been.
Waters to ebb and to flow in peace,
Or with storm to give tongue;
Life that will pulse, and themes
By the lips to be spoken, unsung.

High Tide

FROM the blue reaches of the tidal ways
The land is fringed, and every channel brim
Has the sea's bounty; while from rim to rim
Run freights of life o'er all the sweeping bays.
Its high endeavor has no further praise;
No broader reach remains, no lighter whim;
Its arms encompass every headland dim;
Its glory vaunts in the sun's fullest blaze.
I see not what may come within the hour,
When all this water, like a life outspent,
Is shrunken to the passing of a breath.
So now I fill my soul with all this power,
Assuming every phase magnificent,
Until I know nor passing time nor death.

The Tide-Line

THERE was a tide last night, gone out to-day
Into the blue sea-reaches; and it played
With dallying touch, or often roughly laid
Its strength upon the shore to rend and slay.
In varying mood the line's long curving way
Discloses where his wandering foot was stayed,
Only at rocky rampart steep to fade,
The sea's triumphal tread around the bay.
The seaweed dying in the sun's full light;
A shell left helpless, like a spoken thought
Meant for the heart's own memory to enshrine,
And the shaped wood of ship whose living light
Went down somewhere—aye, many a thing was brought
Both sad and glad along the tidal-line.

Stone Ripple-Marks

BENEATH a cliff wrenched from the inner earth,
All seamed and dark from elemental war,
I saw rich crystals marking many a scar,
Made when the earth was recent from its birth.
I read the first bare pages of her dearth
In long wave-ripples of a sandstone bar,
Formed when the cycles learned to make and mar;
A rocky page of story here set forth.
I held a fossil reptile in my hand,
Till now unseen. And then there came to me
An echoed song through myriad years unsung.
And what is time, I thought, when I may stand
Beside the tracings of a former sea,
Moved by a gentle, rippling wind still young?

The Pines

GRIM warders of the everlasting crags,
To whose bleak avenue the eagle steers,
An endless conclave of the forest peers
Where often Time lays down his blade and lags—
Ye are of other days, when roaming stags
Leaped from no human voice with trembling fears;
Ere came the Micmac and the pioneers;
Or Glooscap plied his paddle to the flags.
The waters seem to speak of other days,
For this quick messenger, the courser tide,
Always the envoy of the regal sea,
Brings the same token as when all the ways
Were young, and every lingering year that died
Made timeless time before it came to me.

Seining

THE broadening shores go glimmering to the sea;
And the great net that struggled with the tide
Hangs dark and moveless, for the winds have died;
And overhead the gulls laugh warningly.
A horse tracks slowly, sinking to the knee
In the red flats, dragging with noiseless glide
The mud-boat after on the trackless, wide
Shore level to the seine's day fishery.
Again, beneath the stars down by the seas,
Dark, sobbing tide-waves slip through span on span
Of net, quick bared and curving like a wing.
Night labor now companioned by the breeze,
The glowing lantern glides to where for man
The harvest of the sea is garnering.

Partridge Island

BENEATH the ceaseless countings of the sun,
Of days and years that round the centuries,
Thou standest where the ocean smites thy knees,
Dark in thy grandeur, moveless and alone.
Countless the storms against thy forehead thrown.
The crumbling touch of years, the wash of seas,
Shall bring to light thy hidden treasures;
And with the deep thy strife is never done.
Whether the storms shall strike with shuddering shock,
Or seas fawn softly at thy moveless feet,
Thy face is pitiless fronting the tide.
The wakened distance hears the falling rock
That lays thy treasure bare, as if to greet
From the young world thou canst no longer hide.

Tides

GREAT effort that nothing can hinder,
Strong-flooded, invincible sea,
I have found in my soul a great motion
From a source that is greater than thee.

In the years of thy seasonless coursing
Thou art constant of passion to move;
Yet my life is a greater born, moving
In the true guiding touch of my love.

In the green depths of all thy concealing
Is the same lifeless passion I read;
But the depths of my heart none can render
Where my life often burdened shall bleed.

The crags where thy way is the fiercest,
Shall frown at thy gaze without fear;
But where is the hand that can guide it,
Or the word for my heart-flood to hear?

And the ways that are levelled to heaven
For the infinite gaze of the sky,
These never shall bear o'er their bosom
The word that my longing shall cry.

These silences when long unbroken,
Dead under the sun and the moon,
Shall never be stiller in motion
Or of sound than my soul in its swoon.

TIDES

And the joy of the whole golden torrent
Often flooding the redolent air,
Shall not measure the passion within me,
Or the light that is born to be there.

For the dark that may balance the lighting
Are the shadows when hidden in sheen,
But the grief of my grieving is never
What the joy of my joying has been.

For thy life is forever but living,
Not the breathing that bringeth to death,
And the end of my reach is not nearer
For the hotter strong passion of breath.

So I read in my being a greater,
Aye, a fiercer and fonder soul-sea
Than the cold, even pulsing forever
Of the currents, great ocean, of thee.

The Tide's Tryst

THE moonlight etched a pale, soft-fingered line
Across the cheek of the deep-breathing tide,
Until beneath his silvery mantle, dyed
With trembling sheen and shade, he glowed like wine.
Warm came his smiling ripples quick and fine;
Then grew a sigh, until a murmur wide
Went overhead from where the crows abide,
And all the wakened poplars made a sign.
Within the lap of the great drowsing hills,
Her face turned full to earth, his feet at rest,
The moon and tide have found their ancient tryst.
With his replying smile the wide night fills
With joy, and gently o'er his glowing breast
Tremble the touches of her golden wrist.

Drifting

VOICELESS, the hour drifts without a will,
And the noon tide lies sleeping on the sand.
The moveless helm needs no ruling hand,
Because there is no wind awake to fill
The sails that idle in the sun, until
A sighing breath shall come as a command,
Sweeping across the Bay. The ship will stand
Away then, every stick and yard athrill.
As yet the tide's great heart is beating slow,
And like a beast that hath enough of play
It drowns near the things it yet may crush.
The wreckage splintered by the sea's mad blow,
And the new bark that left the shore to-day,
Are drifting through the noon-day's sleepy flush.

To Minas

MINAS, storied with a people's woe,
Forever to be linked with their distress,
Thou hast deep wisdom in the bitterness
And joy of life. And ever ebb and flow
My soul-floods with thy tides that come and go.
My stronger life sprang from thy red largess;
And thy green deeps and ceaseless might no less
Did calm my love and deeper hope bestow.
Thou wast the Mentor of my singing dawn,
Laving my lips, and tuning all my blood;
I have no year that is not full of thee.
Voiced with thy deep accordance, living on
To ebb thy strength and rise like all thy flood,
My soul must also feed upon the sea.

An Island

LONE rock, left isled anear the Fundean shore
Receive me into thy unvoiced retreats,
Among thy piney heights and eagle seats,
To lose me in the rock-met rushing roar
Of breaking waves; or, wrapt in sound no more,
To be with silence as a breast that beats
New concourses of life,—when spirit meets
Thy secret life but dimly known before.
Yon melancholy moper of the night
Is alien here. Now all my strength expands
Beside the height of cliff and depth of base,
Thick-veined with amethyst and zeolite.
I take new freedom from thy patient hands,
The sea's anointing fresh upon my face.

Acadie

O BAIE FRANCOIS, swift, regal sea,
Swept from the ocean's fiercest tide,
You filled their souls with mystery,
Of loyal love, courageous pride.

Your pulsing gave their blood the deep,
Warm throbbing of the new-world man,
Gave vision vaster fields to sweep,
A larger hope, a nobler plan.

A thousand miles across the sea,
Unto their world redeemed you drew,
Where slow their hearts waked to be free,
And deeper than they guessed were true.

A hundred generations bred
Them false, and reared them into slaves,
Their pride in servitude, their dead
To teach them false unto their graves.

They felt the blindness leave their eyes,
They learned of manhood from your tides;
Their knowledge came like childhood wise,
As men receive their virgin brides.

Renewed in blood, they learned of thee
Unlettered lessons for their souls,
Strong-blooded, waking Acadie,
Within whose veins thy water rolls.

ACADIE

Red, marshy fields of tidal gift,
Long rivers of the fertile land,
Your shores are joyous with the thrift
Of laboring arm and tender hand.

Here, France, your sleeping power lies,
A nation's strength across the sea,
Where sons shall guard your memories,
And aid your destiny.

Oh, fail them not; give of your heart
Its purest stain to gild your name,
Glory's inexhaustible mart,
A power that shall not bring you shame.

Here are the jewels of radiant hue,
To weight and glorify your crown;
The souls that died to prove them true,—
Their whole ambition and renown.

In every sailor on the sea,
In every wanderer in the wood,
A throbbing love is warm for thee,
Ennobled in his hardihood.

In every tiller of the earth,
Storing his patience and his power,
He holds your name his highest worth,
And waits but for the chosen hour.

Accept his love, and take his hand,
Large is the heart for your defence.
His feet have found the chosen land,
His faith shall never lead him hence.

ACADIE

His sons shall know all loves and hates,
Peasants, evermore content;
Or build thy cities, walls and gates,
And people all thy continent.

Where are thy halls and palaces,
Like these thy marbles shall upbuild?
His heart beats for thy dynasties,
He knows alone what thou hast willed.

Here alien cities lay their walls,
Their fleets shall gather quick and sure,
The new ambition fills their halls,
Their strength shall make their ways secure.

The new-world manhood has its birth,
Unthwarted in its mastery
Of all the younger, western earth,
The great unchained democracy.

Louis the Great, a priceless gem,
Was laid within your open hand.
Louis the Small with gaudy hem,
The tinsel gold you understand,—

You knew not where your glory lay,
Your brightest immortality,
Your crown the glory of the day,
The richest of the land and sea.

O France, here come the great elect,
To crown the nationhood of earth!
The people's heart you did reject,
The kinship lost you gave to birth.

ACADIE

You suckled sickly sons who fell
Unmarked to earth and left no name.
You left unread the parable,
You wept your grief, and knew no blame.

The child with manhood in its breast,
Who languished for the master hand,
Was left uncared-for and a jest
For courts, to die in this west land.

Oh, fate and folly unsurpassed,
Great mockery of thy reign's renown,
To find thy rarest jewel cast,
Set deep within another crown.

Dear Mother of the double brood,
Thy foster-children oft shall weep
For that strong, outcast taint of blood,
And wonder whence the longings leap.

Back through the generations dead,
We pay the tears of bitter cost,
For yet the heart shall rule the head,
And fret the soul for what is lost.

So we are shadowed through the years,
Beneath the sun that shall not set,
By that old heritage of tears,
Unworded memories not to forget.

A Fortified Town

FAIR town, lie calm in sweet repose,
Content among your spreading farms,
No longer trod by battling foes,
Nor ever loud with crash of hateful arms.

In all your story of the past,
The conflict of your fateful years,
The worth of heart-love is not lost,
Sacred the consecration of your tears.

Within these vales the vision brings,
Of peoples sprung from sires to sons
In one large brotherhood that sings
Unspoiled of foemen's curse or hate of guns.

I see the daughters lead their own,
And sing their stories; and the plow
Turns where the centuries have sown,
And crowned with tillage the blue mountain brow.

Two hundred years of sires were born
To hold these homes beside the flood.
He knows he yet must greet the morn,
Arm bare for toil, and vigor in his blood.

The gold he gets is hidden deep,
Deep colored and without alloy.
God's law shall bend them low to reap,
Who mocks his toil his labor shall destroy.

A FORTIFIED TOWN

Who digs the earth and is not brave,
Shall yield beneath his weakening breath;
The stress of life is cruel, the grave
Is open, and the certain thing is death.

So passed a century before the breed
Was born to lay his hand upon
The earth to cast the hardy seed,
Guarded of snow, and softened by the sun.

How many aims shall fail of men
Who cast to win a continent;
A newer race and hope again,
New life, new zeal, and deepest soul's content.

The spring shall grow towards summer's seed,
The vintage gather deep and fill
His vessels; but how heart shall bleed
When winter strikes, and icy storms shall kill.

The strong shall live until the earth
Shall know her sons and stamp them pure;
And mould their souls before their birth,
To know their line forever to endure.

And wars shall chasten, and sad robberies
Shall teach them patience for the trials of life,
Their hearths shall know of grief, their destinies
Shall spring from wars, and hatred, and from strife.

North Mountain

ALL vigilant, thy front against the sea,
Thy great, dark form curved like a mighty arm,
Fending forever the strong tidal blows,
Marking the line that never shall be passed,
Heedless of day or night, or any season's touch,
Crowned with deep forests, cut with agate veins,
White with the snow, or sweetened with the rains,
Hoary with time and moveless as the world,
Hast made a garden of our Acadie.

No fog or frost that clouds thy stony sides,
Laid like an altar when the world was born,
But leaves thee like the mortal that shall go.
Infinity of patience and of strength
Lies in thy form recumbent with the sea,
Yet finite as the opening of a flower.
There is no land a record unto thee,
Thy story is unwritten save upon
Thy own dark front, tide-marked and cycle-worn,
For wisdom to decipher and to read,
Though language is not, nor a hand-writ word.

Blomidon

BEGOTTEN of fire, quick was thy bringing forth,
Internal shudderings and thundering throes,
Rending the fiery depths whence thou arose
To lie all red and radiant o'er the earth.
Spanning the sea afar as with a girth,
Shaped slow beneath the mighty tidal blows,
Time left thee unregarded in repose,
Till life did vaguely long and come to birth.
O patient greatness of a slow pursuit,
The plan of those unnumbered centuries
When forests grew and fell on slope and plains!
Thy rock now lies beneath the living root
And mould of ages; and a splendor skies
Thee, child of fire, now laid in flowery chains.

Minas Basin

INTO thy cup the ocean pours and fills
Thy great marsh-rivers where the ruddy stains
Mix with the waters of a hundred hills;
And then with eager quaffing lip he drains.
Where sea-grass under every air-flow thrills,
And stirs the level watch-ground of the cranes,
As on an altar the sea's offering spills,
Once to the day, once to the night that reigns.
On thy broad rim the great Designer's wand
Has wrought the fairest things of earth and sky
And made a wonder of thy mighty tides.
And a Romance is thine not writ with hand,
In every point and bay, never to die
While o'er thy surface a winged vessel rides.

The Channel

UPWARD ever, outward ever,
Past the island and the pier;
Fringing every inland river,
Flooding marsh and misty mere.

Voiceless in the outer roads,
Shouting over point and reef;
Lolling near the sunless woods;
O'er the marshes like a thief.

Morn and noonday, night and even,
Old as spring and winter prime;
Twin with earth and grey with heaven;
Playmate younger yet than time.

Evolution

THREE centuries have risen like the tide,
And ebbd away upon time's ocean wide.
Out of the great unknown more floods shall rise,
Bringing the changes. Only changeless skies
Shall calmly note the cycles as they pass,
As man has marked the flowering of the grass.
So shall he live his days in Acadie
Beyond the terrors of the lonely sea.
Beyond the horror and distress of life,
The seasons of long toil, heroic strife,
When nights are filled with phantoms of his fear,
The dread for those he loves and holds most dear,

EVOLUTION

When lived no man upon the war-scarred earth
Braver to face the death he knew as birth.
So shall the sea rise to its resting place,
Where generations lift the hopeful face,
And give to worthy deed their later race.
How shall we know we have not in our veins
The touch of savage and the cruel stains,
The rage that has become a ceaseless shame,
The pride that shall outlive an early blame,
The deed of blood that centuries shall leave
To tinge the veins until the soul receive
Its finer gentleness, and breath of love?
How many centuries before the stains remove?
How many sins they bore across the sea!
Behind it all what long brutality,
The deep ancestral taint of blacker years
From courtesan, and sycophant who wears
A serfdom in his pride-crowned head,
King-homage bending ever to the dead!
Here flows the strong regenerating flood
To purge the taint and purify the blood.
The airs shall wither up the cankerous spot,
And suns shall heal the sores that rot
The soul, until the wings spread broad
Unto the boundless reaches of his God.

Growth

THREE centuries the tides have sought this ground
Of summering days; three centuries their round
The angry sweep of snow-encircling skies,
Yet change has not played off her phantasies,
For granite hills their leafy coat yet bear,
Primordial mounts the earth's cold youth declare,
Basaltic ranges, black and fire-born,
Gemmed deep with sard, and season-worn.
These stony tablets close their secrets hold
Where sink the roots in life's most ancient mould.
Where storms unnumbered have been widely shed,
Leaping the rocks or creeping in soft bed
Down to the tide. This royal sea
A briny lake has lived its tragedy,
Bearing its message from the outer deep,
Unto the meadows where they sleep,
Amid the hills filling with stronger blood,
And the unrest of ever-changing mood,
The long red rivers of the inner ways.
So shall it ever through the nights and days,
From inland lake and shadowed forest floor,
Bear those bright waters to yon rocky door,
Ever laid open. Mellowed with the frost,
And softened under sun and rain, and tossed
Into dark lines behind the plow, the grain
Waves under summer suns across the plain;
And orchards redden, while the man
Grows to the manhood of God's higher plan.
There is no instant end if he shall read
The words aright, and shape his hope and deed,
Into the future where no bud shall blow
From the lost seed his wide-swept hand shall throw,

GROWTH

His faith shall not be folly, nor his word
As any plumage of a passing bird.
Nor shall he labor as a fickle child,
By every bursting bud beguiled,
But build his strength while he may scan
The passing hours, and know the truer man.

Midwinter

WHERE the meadows sloped to the fossil cliffs which fell
Black-edged to the deepest flats of tawny sand,
And brooks break into the louder sound of the rising tide,
Where the bridges spanned 'twixt the dykes and the
gypsum fields,
Where the summer woods and the lily pools were calm and
cool,
In the summer prime when the earth was hot and the days
kept late;
Where youth was aflame with love and desire,
And the dawns came quick as if to a call, and the birds
Were singing loud the second joy of the mating song,
And the bolder color of blossom and fields of grain,
And the slow wave of the tidal fields hid the wingless brood,
When the eye of my soul, and the voice of my life, and
the wish
Of my short, full years, and the pulsing of all my heart,
Were as one—eyes, voice, and desire, and the beating of
pulse—
In a spirit of love.
I can see all the tide is amove with its burden of ice,

MIDWINTER

Dull flowing and gorged; and the fields are aglisten and
bare.

The forests and intervals tell the story of waiting,
And the wind from the river is heavy and balmless and
bleak,

Where the salt from the marshes bore upward and out of
the tide.

Not a far-winged song of a sailor gives joy to the sea,
No whitening sail goes outward, no fisher drifts in.

All the summer of youth and the warmth of my life
Seem laid with the tide, dark and chill unto death.

A Summer Day

THE tide was out. Like an open hand,
With fingers reaching the dyke-lands dry,
Lay the dull red stretch of the basin sand,
Far and flat to the lower sky.

The higher strips of the glistening beach
Were a highway winding beyond my sight.
The banks were green as I strove to reach
The shrine of my love ere the fall of night.

The marsh-hay bowed in the ripening sun,
The crane stood guard, and the crow, a spy,
Cried out his warning and then was gone
To the distant fields of ripening rye.

A SUMMER DAY

The ways were still o'er all the reach
Of shining flats and golden pools.
Within the eddies near the beach
Stirred in the tide the passing schools.

Out in the rapid, swirling tide
A lone white porpoise sought the sea.
The cloudless heaven opened wide
To silence and to mystery.

The bright mirage of the other shore
Was trembling on the falling tide.
Midday was filled to its ripened core,
And the summer air glowed far and wide.

The Tide Line

LONG, furrowed shores, and fields that upward rise,
Wrinkled and scored since earth came out of sea;
The myriad suns and far, unfailing skies,
And thou, swift tide, chained to thy destiny;—

What is the mystery of thy flooding flight,
Which despot Time unchanging shall declare;
Moons drawing evermore from day to night,
To rage and smile, to bury and to bare?

Blind powers of the hidden plan of earth,
Spent force of rivers which to thee unroll;
Unending purposes that have no birth,
No guiding spirit and no recking soul;

Yet shalt thou reach the lives of men, and throw
Upon their hearts the pall of fear and hate,
Till dread shall watch thee swiftly come and go,
And see thee living, and so call thee Fate.

Thou markest with thy fingers everywhere
Thine endless round of empire; and dost lay
New lines upon the earth with fickle care,
Unmindful of the reach of yesterday.

Dread reaper, thou dost make thy windrow long,
Sowing against no day or century.
Avenging nothing, thou dost right no wrong;
Thou art the unread page of mystery.

The Winter Tide

IN the lands where long toiling is mirth,
On the shores that can strengthen and cheer,
In the places of mating and birth,
Where sire and dam shall not fear,
The snows have come down and the life-glow is lost
In the girding and grip of the frost.

So youth shall give homage to age,
And death feign the quiet of sleep,
When winter shall war for his wage,
And range where the wide summers reap;
And the autumn shall waste in the blue of the sky,
And the plains of the harvest shall die.

And the ice-burdened waters shall flow
From the sea to the red-bordered ways
Where grey gull and marsh-owl waft slow
Through the sunless, white, narrowing days;
And the deepening chill of the night dark and wide,
Lifts the voice of the outgoing tide.

The white hills shall fade in the dark;
And the noiseless, quick falling of snow
Shall uncurtain the red warning spark,
Where the pier reaches out in the flow.
Ah, better the sea for the ice-stiffened sail
Than the haven where rock-surges wail.

THE WINTER TIDE

While the bridge like a sentry asleep,
Deep wrapped in the mist of the night,
Where the headlands are dim to the deep,
When the tide sweeps the channels in might,
Then the lightflash that warns is sleepless and wide,
And a finger directs o'er the tide.

When the quick-chilling fogs gather deep,
When white light and red glimmer low,
Then the blare of the horn shall outleap
The fiercest mad winds that may blow,
And the watch shall draw closer the wheel to his breast,
And the sleepers moan low in unrest.

Blue sea-reach and day-reach and home
Lie outward, thin lines on the chart.
Like a meteor that earthward shall come,
Or the aimless, long flight of a dart,
Shall it seem in the point of the spray-cutting prow,
To the watch with the brine on his brow.

And afar on the hills of the south,
In the wood goes the call of the moose.
Life's longing expressed of the mouth;
And aloft in the flight of the goose
Is the cry of a heart and the yearning of quest
Never done while the sun seeks the west.

Lo, the lift of the flood calm and slow,
The immeasurable strength of the tide,
And the fields that are buried below,
From the dykes to the sands levelled wide
By the side of great rivers overborne by the sea,
In the grip of the frost's mastery.

THE WINTER TIDE

Though the heart of warm nature is still,
The fruits of her nurture in dust,
The tide drifts with unyielding will,
Ever breaking the chains of the frost,
And the buffeting waves strew the shores with their pack,
Quick shifting red channels of rack.

How fare they who live on the reef,
The bell-buoy knelling to lee?
Is their slumber unconscious of grief,
With the eye of the light out to sea?
How deep are the sighs that shall greet on the tides,
And a wish for the comfort it hides.

On the shores where the tide swings a hand
To a sonorous measure of song,
Touches shoulder and cheek of the land,
Or leaps in the ways of the strong,
There is burden of death and delay in the sun
And the deeds of the summer undone.

And the tide bears a mantle of snow,
From the marshes deep-reddened and torn,
And no voice greets the day's dying glow,
Or remembers to usher the morn.
While the scavenger wings from the dark of the wood,
With the shadows lift over the flood.

Whereon will the sun kindly rest,
Every meadow laid calmly in death.
The forests take into their breast
From the seas every bleak northern breath;
But the hope of the past and the future's great need
None regards in the root and the seed.

ALEWIVES

Where death has not lingered to smite,
By hovel and warm fireside,
There is waiting by day and by night,
While the ice-burdened, sleepless, strong tide
Flows inward and out though the winter grips hard;
And strong Hope shall not fail of reward.

Alewives

THE watcher of the net within the stream
Stands high above the fish that upward move
To seek from the salt sea the lake above,
Filling the glistening waters with their gleam.
He leaps upon the balanced, upturned beam—
The net's white meshes slip into the air,
Hung deep with silvery fish caught unaware,
Waking the waiting, drowsy, patient team.
Again the silence, and the watching eyes,
And the warm springtime flooding all the earth.
The mated blue-wing, darting o'er the dyke,
Onward and ever up their way shall rise,
Unwitting of their death as of their birth,
As now again his arms rise up to strike.

The Deserted House

AROUND me are the memories of the past,
The shadows of the buried yesterdays,
With all the fruitage of the seed long cast,
The sod-grown gardens and thick-shaded ways
Where youth and manhood faced the dawn,
To leave their mark, and then were gone.

Years have encroached upon these once broad slopes;
Neglected is the roof that held them dear.
Familiar places kind of fondest hopes
Surround me now,—red roads that wander near,
Where trees stretch out in straggling file;
The path laid seaward from the stile.

The season's blush is on the ripened fruit,
Quince, grape and apple, and the swinging pear,
Where my large kinship first took faithful root,
And flowered into souls whose names I bear,
Amid the echoes of my halls,
Deserted and low-leaning walls.

The wash of wandering tides reaches my ears,
As when the sons were called unto the sea;
And I shall not forget the prayers and tears
Of mothers waiting, and whose bended knee
First bred in childhood man's fine pride,
And kindled love which never died.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

And through the years of life and death wherein
The children of my sheltering laughed and throve,
I hold those hours unchanged of joy or sin
Crowning the mother's deep, unswerving love;
And in the silence of these days
Glow brighter than the sun's full blaze.

Her love is waiting at the vine-wreathed door.
Her eyes gaze patiently from window-pane.
Her feet speed lovingly across the floor;
And where the children slept she stands again.
And into my long life she gave
The light that Christ brought from the grave.

And up and down the hills behind the plow,
The nurture of my hearth has served them well,
Until age came, and Death breathed on the brow;
And graves have gathered where they fell.
This is the silence of our peace,—
The love that lives is our release.

Sand

THE tide is out. The dun banks curving high,
Cut hollow like a chalice rim, arise
Above the sand, marked everywhere with signs
Mysterious; embossed with such device
As water-eddies fashion when they ply
Their ripples, murmuring on the moving confines
Of the waters. Seaward sunk beyond the hills,
The tide is out. The chalice has outpoured
Its rich libations, brimming till it spills
Among the rocks and rushes of the bord:
Tidal offerings brought from distant sea,
The whole blue sea, its purest green
Mixed with the golden sand, and where the lee
Receives a crystal river and the sheen
Of forests, are presented to the Day.
Too, when the midnight moon looks for its beams
Upon the mirror of the coming streams,
Another gift to Night is on the shore;
Gathered volumes dumb in dark array,
Filled in darkness and in silence cold,
On altars shadowy they rising pour.
The stranded mists drip chill and fold
With unreflecting veil the shades beneath,
Stricken with the tides with soundless breath.
Morn and Eve prepare their altars gay
With parting splendors of the night and day.

SAND

The tide is out, spent to sand-washing rills
Meandering outward to the rock-worn Bay.
Bleached smoothly-white with every sun that fills
The tide-deserted hollow with its gold,
The seine-poles straggle. Slender ropes of net
Stretch like blind, groping arms that plead for help.
In glittering helplessness the fish are shoaled
Above the meshes dripping still with wet.
Amid the garnet dulse and snake-like kelp,
The silver salmon, vagrant of the seas,
Beats with its tender sides the dulling sand
With strength that leaped the waterfalls,
To leave its life on still cerulean lees,
Here looks its agony and dies. The shad
Lie heaped, by gulls down-circling scanned,
Whirling rapid, fearless, airy rings
Above the listed boat, the white-kneed maid,
The wind-brown fisher and the fisher lad.
The net waves heavily, yet softly sings
To wings disporting, and the gusts unbraid
The maiden's hair.

The laden boat is rocked,
With buried fluke and chain yet locked,
By the dark tide. The poles oft bent before,
Now quiver in the eddy, sinking low
Beneath the rising sea; and on the shore
The reeds are floating with the overflow.

The tide is in; the dun banks are no more.
A placid stream reflects the summer sky;
At wharf-rest doth the boat unloaded lie.

The Midnight Tide

MIDNIGHT came from a sombre bed,
When the winds forgotten, the moon was dead.
The night-noon drifted with time asleep,
Nor a sound nor a sigh from the rising deep;
While the clasp of the fog with a silent hand
Dropped stealthy and cold on the unconscious land.
The noon, the fog, and the silent tide
Found the shores asleep and crept close beside.
So the tide came in. The night-noon bowed
While the fog lay close like a fallen cloud.
The breath of the sea rolled out and away,
Flooding the valleys that knew not day;
Poured from the curve of a reedy brim,
As the tide swelled up and the flats grew dim;
And the murky miles of channels were lost
Like a city's avenues crooked and crossed,
When the earth slips down beneath the tide;
And no door to the touch of its hand denied,
Bares every chamber and secret there,
To the gloom of a watery sepulchre.
Silent and deep through the stagnant night,
Swinging beside the red pier-light
That flashes and glows to a blinded scene
In the fog, the night and the tide between.
Strong and far into sombrenesses,
Creeping into the dayless recesses
So distant and dark not a bat shall cling,
Nor a snake shall glide, nor a bird shall wing;
In the rayless gloom of a lifeless lair,—
Nor even the fog shall be wandering there:
These places, to sound and to day denied,
Shall receive the touch of the chilly tide.
The darkness of life and the darkness of death
Will cling together in caverns beneath.

THE MIDNIGHT TIDE

Near cliff and shore and glistening sand,
Where the ocean comes with a gentle hand,
The tide is a breath of a maiden's breast
When sleep is calm and dreams are rest.
When the cleaving lips seem moulded fast—
Mute as from marble carved and cast.
And the ebb and flow of the potent streams,
Like the heart within, are wrapped in dreams.
The midnight-tide breathed deep and long;
Its sigh was soft, but deep and strong,
And the children gazed and sought in vain
For the towers of sand where the boat had lain.
But the footprints left with the evening play,
And the boat they stranded are gone away.
But the maddened gasp of the marshland sea
Under the night and silently,
Rises and rushes, falls and lags,
Must drink out life to the deepest dregs.
The marsh that lies away to the tide
Till the margins fall and the flats are wide,
A hundred feet in the glistening vales
Where the tide dies out from the grassy swales,
Shall sink in the grasp of a soundless wave,
And only midnight shall mark the grave.
The bark that swings with a curving chain
Shall rise to the sky and fall again;
And the land a bride, and the sea a groom,
And the fog like a mantle wet with gloom,
And the still night-noon to lay it wide,
While even the hour will calmly bide;
The fever and pain, and the heavy throb
Of the great tide-heart will cease to rob
The silence of calm, and the whole night through
The fog will chill till the sun cuts through.

